



**A FOUCAULT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY:  
GOVERNMENTALITY, BIOPOLITICS  
AND DISCIPLINE IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM**

EDITED BY

**Sam Binkley and Jorge Capetillo-Ponce**

# A Foucault for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



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Governmentality, Biopolitics and Discipline  
in the New Millennium

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P U B L I S H I N G

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Edited by Sam Binkley and Jorge Capetillo

This book first published 2009

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-0444-4, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-0444-8

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## PREFACE

This collection gathers selected works presented at the Fifth annual meeting of the Social Theory Forum at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, in April of 2008. The Social Theory Forum has a long history at this institution. Organized jointly by the Sociology and other departments and institutes, as well as interested faculty and students, the Social Theory Forum aims at the creative exploration, development, promotion and publication of cross-disciplinary social theory in an applied and critical framework. This tradition of engaged and critical scholarship was reflected in the Fifth annual meeting, for which Professor Sam Binkley of Emerson College was invited to join the Forum's traditional organizing committee, consisted of Professors Jorge Capetillo, Siamak Movahedi and Glenn Jacobs. Titled *A Foucault for the 21st Century: Governmentality, Biopolitics and Discipline in the New Millennium*, the conference sought to expand scholarly understanding of Foucault's central theoretical legacy, but also to apply his ideas to a range of contemporary empirical phenomena. While originally envisioned in the tradition of the Social Theory Forum as an intimate one day event, the overwhelming response to the initial conference announcement led the organizers to expand it to a two day conference, including 18 panels, 4 keynote speakers and 64 participants. From the conference proceedings emerged a plethora of engagements and reflections on Foucauldian thought and practice, a representative selection of which is constituted in this volume.

The editors of this anthology are grateful to the organizers of the Social Theory Forum, as well as the Forum's supporters at the University of Massachusetts, Boston: the Office of the Dean (Donna Kuizenga) of the College of Liberal Arts, the office of the Provost (Winston Langley), the William Monroe Trotter Institute, the Mauricio Gaston Institute, and the Honors Program. We are also grateful to the Departments of Anthropology, Applied Linguistics, Sociology, Women's Studies, Political Science, Africana Studies, Philosophy and American Studies. We are particularly grateful for the immense support shown for this conference by UMass Boston graduate students Samita Bhattarai and Elena Engle, and especially to Allyson Quinn, who was the coordinator of the conference. Another UMass graduate student, Jay Byron, worked as Assistant

Editor in the final stages of the editing process. We also send our thanks to Richard Koenigsberg, Mei Ha Chan, Orion Anderson and Richard G. Klein, of the Library of Social Science for pulling together an outstanding book exhibition, and especially to Richard Koenigsberg for his remarkable support in publicizing the conference's initial call for papers. An enormous debt of gratitude is owed to Christopher Rand for his eagle-eyed editorial and proof reading work on all manuscripts, and also to George Lazar for his assistance in pummeling these works into shape. Most importantly, we are grateful to the national and international scholars who traveled great distances to present their works at the Fifth Annual Social Forum, for without their efforts, none of this would have come to pass. It is our sincere hope that this anthology captures the spirit and integrity, as well as the scope and vibrancy of their individual works, if only through a selective sample.

Sam Binkley  
Jorge Capetillo-Ponce

# INTRODUCTION

SAM BINKLEY

How relevant is Foucault's thought to the world we inhabit today? Such is the question to which this anthology is addressed, reflected in the title of this volume, as well as the conference from which its contents were chosen: *A Foucault for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

Such a question, posed here as a provocation to thought which necessarily runs the risk of reduction, can be taken in many ways. One might interpret it as inquiring after the specific relevance of Foucault's studies to the changing conditions we encounter in our historical present, as if to ask: is Foucault, who did so well with 18<sup>th</sup> Century penality and 19<sup>th</sup> Century sex, really up to the challenges of globalization, media saturation and unstable financial markets? Is Foucault now old hat, better suited for the study of Greeks, Enlightenment reformers and sexologists than 21<sup>st</sup> century yuppies, shoppers, facebook, financial speculators and the global poor. Moreover, this question seems to invite others: if a truly 21<sup>st</sup> Century Foucault does exist, is it a Foucault distinct from the ones we have known in the past? Have changing times required that we discard our old Foucaults and invent new ones, or are there parts we can save, parts we should revise, or previously neglected parts we should draw to the fore and emphasize? What new objects (economies, institutions, subjectivities, practices) have emerged or are likely to emerge for which the Foucault of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is ill prepared, and how shall we fashion a Foucault better adapted to these tasks? There is a strong sense among the articles that follow that such a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Foucault exists, and that this new Foucault is a Foucault poised to address a range of trends characteristic of our contemporary predicament: the intensifying commodification of personal and social life, the infusion of genetic science into a range of contemporary discourses and activities, the increasing diffusion of surveillance technologies, the "responsibilization" of individual economic conduct and the more general embrace of market rationalities as the penultimate model for all social forms. As these essays demonstrate, the Foucault for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is as primed to interrogate these phenomena

today as he was in the last Century, where he dealt so handily with prisons, sexologists and the like.

Yet to imagine that the question of the contemporary relevance of Foucault is exhausted by changing empirical conditions alone is to reduce Foucault to precisely the kind of historicism he rejected, and to ignore the animating principle driving his work. For Foucault, the “happy positivist” whose nominalist genealogies of modern institutions and subjectivities cut unlikely paths across and through the epochal schemes of grey-bearded social theory, the charge of obsolescence is a more complex proposition than it might be for other canonical authors. While it might be possible, for example, to claim the obsolescence of Marxism on the basis of the subsumption of 19<sup>th</sup> century capitalism by more contemporary economic forms, or the failure of Weber to see past the iron cage to the expressive lives we live today, it is difficult to pin Foucault’s work down to a periodizing scheme by which we might then declare him to be superseded by some unanticipated development. Foucault can never be passé, if for no other reason than his assertions were never meant to project distinct teleologies or designate historical periodizations. While at times he may have gestured toward “great ages” (the classical age, the modern age, the age of sovereignty or discipline), what was central to his analysis was not the unfolding sequence of distinct world-historical stages, but the overlapping constellations of forms and technologies through which societies constitute themselves through the production of distinct subjects. Foucault’s oft cited assertion of the triangulation of the power formations associated with sovereignty, discipline and biopower affirms the distance he placed between his own approach and that of those who traffic in tidy, sequenced “ages.” Absent such a claim, it is difficult to charge him with having been surpassed by the present in any strong sense.

This fact, however, has not prevented recent critics from declaring Foucault “over,” particularly those who link his legacy to the analysis of disciplinarity as a general form of power. Indeed, it is fair to suppose that Foucault is best known in the mainstream of social science literature for his historical inquiries into the origins of disciplinary society, in a period extending from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Today, however, under the conditions of global modernity, with the increasing ubiquity of markets, the break up of centralized states and the dissolution of national boundaries, the bounded, disciplinary societies Foucault described seem a thing of the past. Far from disciplinary, society today is “post panoptic,” as Nancy Fraser has argued — subject to and conditioned by flows of bodies,

power and capital that exceed the territorializing boundaries of the disciplinary dispositif. (Fraser 2003) Fraser's critique echoes similar objections from Gilles Deleuze in his "Post-script on Societies of Control," which notes the obsolescence of the totalizing control mechanisms associated with the relatively distinct disciplinary worlds of the school, the family, the factory and the prison. (Deleuze 1992) Deleuze describes the passage from the segmented enclosures of the disciplinary society to the continuous networks of power that characterize the present: "In the disciplinary societies one was always starting again (from school to the barracks, from the barracks to the factory), while in the societies of control one is never finished with anything—the corporation, the educational system, the armed services being metastable states coexisting in one and the same modulation, like a universal system of deformation." Indeed, one can even find these epochal challenges to the relevance of Foucault circulating before his death: it was Jean Baudrillard who, in the 1970s, famously came forward with the proposal that we "Forget Foucault," on the grounds that his analyses of power remained wedded to a moribund logic of production, one long since displaced by one of commodity seduction. (Baudrillard, 1987)

Such challenges err on two assumptions, the first (already mentioned) is the belief that Foucault intended his critiques as totalizing theories of an age: that the age of sovereignty gave way to the age of discipline which later gave way to the age of biopower and governmentality. The second error, however, goes more to the heart of his wider critical enterprise as defined by his methods, whether applied to ancient Greece, early modern incarceration, 19<sup>th</sup> century sexology or post-war liberalism. In all these cases, Foucault's aim was to enlist the study of the past in a critical program centered on the destabilization of the categories that organize our (or any) present. Foucault's concern was never to explain any particular present only in terms of its evolution out of a given past: his aim was to demonstrate the uses of the past for the transformation of any given present, to explore the ways in which the taken-for-granted forms of the present depend, in largely unacknowledged ways, on suppressed ruptures, contradictions, events and fissures within the past. Foucault summarizes the critical thrust of this project in his essay on Nietzschean historiography, as one that "deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millennial ending. It will uproot its traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity. This is

because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting.” (Foucault 1977: 88)

By this token, a new slant on the question of Foucault’s contemporary relevance is raised. Rather than asking after the timeliness of Foucault’s work for the comprehension of a new, empirical present (is Foucault still up to it? Can he still explain our present, or has it surpassed him?), perhaps a better question is: how can we, within the horizons of a present Foucault may never have addressed, reintroduce his project and destabilize the categories through which we live by uncovering the hidden events, ruptures and contradictions in a past that the present prefers not to discuss? In short, how can we recover, with Foucault, the historical sense that knowledge is for cutting?

For Foucault—who never presented his work as a systematic or normative theory of history, but instead as a tool-box for the historical critique of the present—the question of contemporary relevance can only be one of the adaptability and usefulness of his tools to the undermining of the unthought foundations that support the present. In this regard, Foucault’s toolbox for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century continues to hold something for everyone: his analysis of disciplinary societies proves particularly helpful in studying the most contemporary features of the prison-industrial complex as well as current manifestations of the surveillance society; his archaeologies of discourse help explain the most novel efforts of moral reformers; his studies of ethics fit nicely with contemporary lifestyle movements, and his work on governmentality is well suited to recent changes in the professional lives of workers in a flexible labor force. While preferred tools may have changed and been brought to bear on new objects, it is undeniably the case that in the present century, as in the last, Foucault’s knowledge continues to cut.

Yet there are other ways in which the contemporary relevance of Foucault might be discussed. In testing this new Foucault, one might appeal not as much to changing historical conditions as to the increasing availability of new works by the author himself, as well as newly translated and published lectures and research. In this respect, the Foucault for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century might be one culled from entirely different sources than that of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, less from the books and monographs to which previous generations of his readers have been confined. Most obvious are the lecture courses given by Foucault at the Collège de France from the early 1970s until his death (courses that are now being read and discussed

widely and whose imprint on contemporary Foucault scholarship is increasingly unmistakable, if equally controversial). These lectures promise to deliver a Foucault with considerably more to say on a range of topics than his books led us to believe. With detailed excursions on the Christian pastoral, the political framing of race through the life sciences, the origins of economic liberalism and the hermeneutics of the subject, this new Foucault might be one with a richer theoretical tool-box than the one we had previously known. The availability of these lectures in English over the past decade has set in motion intellectual currents that are reflected in sections of this collection, dealing with governmentality, biopolitics, and practices of subjectivation. In addition to the publication of his lectures, the recent translation and publication of Foucault's journalistic correspondences from Iran (where he covered the events of the Iranian revolution) have suggested new applications of Foucault scholarship to spirituality and religion. In both cases, there are rewards but also tremendous hazards in piecing together a new Foucault from sources not typically recognized in his official dossier: the obvious advantage of deriving new critical instruments brings with it the risk of distorting the trajectory of his thought, submerging his best works in a sea of off-hand comments and abandoned experiments.

Thus far, the dimensions of the question with which we began have been (perhaps rather rhetorically, and at the risk of schematization) considerably expanded: a new Foucault could be judged against the backdrop of changing historical conditions and the emergence of new empirical objects, or through the emergence of new scholarly materials which ask us to deepen and reevaluate the Foucault we already knew. With this scale in mind, it is possible to describe the works that compose this volume in terms of the spirit in which they respond to this question. However, it quickly becomes clear that this scheme is of only limited service, as most articles variously engage new objects of contemporary life, as well as new perspectives on Foucault's works, derived from an evolving debate in which the emergence of new materials is key. Nonetheless, it was with this distinction in mind that contributions to this volume were organized.

As described in the preface to this collection, the articles composing this volume were drawn from presentations at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Social Theory Forum, at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. When the Call for Papers for this conference, publicized early in 2008, drew more than 200 submissions, the organizers saw the opportunity to expand the conference itself into a wider event, one that could effectively take the temperature of



international Foucault Scholarship with a concerted overview. What emerged was a range of applications of Foucault to new empirical phenomenon (consumption, genetic science) as well as more engagements with themes more familiar to Foucauldian analyses (incarceration, surveillance, state formation, pedagogy). We also observed a powerful interest in topics less familiar to the Foucauldian tradition (race, religion, consumption, economic life). Particularly striking in the sample of submissions we received was the volume of interest in two key themes: governmentality and biopolitics, and the noted under-representation of what had traditionally been for decades a topic that had drawn droves of scholars and activists to Foucault's work: discipline and sexuality. In particular, the presence of Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France loomed large, particularly those of 1978-79—a presence confirmed in the overwhelming number of papers bearing the terms "governmentality," "biopolitics" or "neoliberalism" in their titles. The selection and organization of this volume, as with the conference itself, is meant to reflect what we perceived to be the concerns represented in this sample.

Toward this end, the present volume begins with a series of sections engaging developments in Foucauldian scholarship, variously attributable to new perspectives introduced by the publication of his lectures at the Collège de France. Section I: Neoliberalism and Economic Conduct, brings together four contributions that variously draw from Foucault's provocative commentary on post-war neoliberalism. Foucault's discussion of this topic, in his course *Birth of Biopolitics* offered in 1978-79, represents perhaps the most direct extension into the contemporary field of any of his genealogical studies. In it he provides not only an insightful mapping of the economic domain onto the matrix of disciplinarity and governmentality, but also an analysis to the formation of uniquely economic subjectivities—the entrepreneurial self, who undertakes her own self-government as an economic enterprise. These themes are taken up by Read, McGushin, Behrent and Wilson in a series of inquiries into the place of the neoliberal economy in Foucault's wider analysis of power, and the production of unique subjectivities this entails. Indeed, this theme is carried over into Section II: Subjection, Subjectivation and the Government of the Self, wherein the specific practices by which individuals assume the government of their own conducts is explored by Rosenberg & Milchman, and Bonnafous-Boucher. What is perhaps most relevant in these two sections is not only the novelty of encountering in Foucault's own oeuvre an extended discussion of topics of such uniquely contemporary significance (writing before the elections of Margaret

Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, the term neoliberal was on few of the radars of the French academic left), but the manner in which he frames processes of subjectivation viewed as an effect of economic, rather than institutional, practices. Where under the disciplinary motif, readers had perhaps become used to a Foucault for whom power acted upon relatively passive subjects, what we discover here is a relation in which considerable agency and autonomy is exercised by the subject in the practice of her own subjectivation.

Section III presents a series of engagements with what is undoubtedly another significant theoretical thread to emerge in contemporary Foucault scholarship. The idea of biopower, first offered to readers in the final chapter of the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*, and later presented in his lectures of 1975-76, *Society Must Be Defended*, has now taken on great importance, not only for Foucault readers and scholars, but in an activist political discourse identified with the anti-globalization movement, and associated with the Italian left, in particular with the recent work of Giorgio Agamben. In a general sense, the uniquely contemporary relevance of biopower stems from what is perceived to be the more thorough satiation of the power relations associated with global capitalism, which differently penetrates subjects when contrasted to the instrumentalizing techniques of disciplinary power. Where power today touches not just upon what subjects do (their labor) but what they might do (their livelihood), one can say that power becomes biopower, extending to life itself. Contemporary perspectives on the meaning of biopower are explored in four articles by Kirshner, Bussolini, Karskens and Nealon. Together, sections I-III are meant to establish key theoretical developments reflected in contemporary Foucault scholarship, which we take to gravitate around, on the one hand, concepts of governmentality and neoliberalism, and on the other, biopolitics and biopower. Both of these themes develop from new readings of Foucault's intellectual development in the late 1970s' gleaned from his lectures from that time, and both resonate with their relevance to developments coming into play well after his death.

The sections that follow present a series of works that are perhaps more responsive to the empirical and concrete challenges of the changing conditions of the present than to the revisions or expansion of Foucault's original thought (although, as I have pointed out, this distinction is ultimately only of limited value). Section IV provides papers by Dennis and Lewis that reflect the classically Foucauldian concern with education

and pedagogy as institutional practices deeply implicated in the production of disciplinary subjects, albeit through practices and forms that have undergone radical revision over the course of time. In Section V: Governing National Populations, Pyykkönen, Alderson and Malette offer varying perspectives on the production and maintenance of nation states through operations variously targeting the life of populations, the borders confining the space of the nation, and the genealogy of outsiders. Perhaps the section most resonant with the Foucault of the disciplinary society comes with Section VI: Control and the Prison Industrial Complex, although contributions from Staples and Pemberton clearly problematize the reductionism associated with the traditional disciplinary model in favor of new technologies which disseminate surveillance and control mechanisms deep into the fabrics of everyday life, and analyses of new economies in which incarceration assumes a unique status as a new industrial force.

With Section VII: Religion and Political Spirituality, a theme that has in recent years occasioned much discussion is addressed by Ghamari-Tabrizi and Posadas, specifically Foucault's provocative and problematic engagement with the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. While writings reflecting Foucault's early enthusiasm for what quickly turned out to be an oppressive regime have been discussed for years by Foucault scholars, their recent publication sparked new interest in this period, and in the wider implications of Foucault's work for theology, spirituality and religious studies more generally. Another area in which Foucault's work has drawn considerable attention is in the study of the emerging scientific research fields of genetics, and in its relationship to discourses on race and racial difference. In Section VIII: Genetics, Genomics and Racialized Life, Levina, Bliss and Han offer analyses, variously drawn from Foucault's claims concerning biopower, of the manner in which the life sciences have reshaped much contemporary practice around race and racial identity. And Finally, an unlikely field to emerge within Foucault studies, yet one that shows considerable promise for future research, comes with Section IX: Consumption as a Way of Life. While consumer culture has long endured as an object of research for many working in the tradition of Cultural Studies, surprisingly little of this work has drawn from Foucault, perhaps—if we accept Baudrillard's argument mentioned earlier—because Foucault's emphasis on a productivist notion of power has blinded him to the fields of seduction in which consumption operates. However, turning to the later work of Foucault, Zevnik and Finn discover a trove of writings on self-care and the ethics of the self whose relevance to

contemporary consumer lifestyles provides a new perspective on consumption as a practice of self-formation.

This plan, we believe, captures the spirit in which the Fifth annual meeting of the Social Theory Forum was convened at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and that the Conference, *A Foucault For the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* was presented. While many distinguished works were by necessity not included in this volume, we are grateful to offer this selection to readers in the hope that it advances their own engagements with the contemporary relevance of Foucault's work.

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**SECTION I:**  
**NEOLIBERALISM AND ECONOMIC CONDUCT**

# A GENEALOGY OF HOMO-ECONOMICUS: NEOLIBERALISM AND THE PRODUCTION OF SUBJECTIVITY

JASON READ

In the opening pages of David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* we find the following statement "Neoliberalism . . . has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world" (Harvey, 2005: 3). While Harvey's book presents a great deal of research on neoliberalism, presenting its origins in such academic institutions as the "Chicago School," its spread in the initial experiments in Chile, and its return to the countries of its origin through the regimes of Reagan and Thatcher, as well as its effects on China and the rest of the world, the actual process by which it became hegemonic, to the point of becoming common sense, is not examined. While it might be wrong to look for philosophy in a work which is primarily a work of history, a "brief" history at that, aimed at shedding light on the current conjuncture, it is worth pointing out this lacuna since it intersects with a commonly accepted idea about "neoliberalism," that it is as much a transformation *in* ideology as it is a transformation *of* ideology. Neoliberalism, in the texts that have critically confronted it, is generally understood as not just a new ideology, but a transformation of ideology in terms of its conditions and effects. In terms of its conditions, it is an ideology that is generated not from the state, or from a dominant class, but from the quotidian experience of buying and selling commodities from the market, which is then extended across other social spaces, "the marketplace of ideas," to become an image of society. Secondly, it is an ideology that refers not only to the political realm, to an ideal of the state, but to the entirety of human existence. It claims to present not an ideal, but a reality; human nature. As Fredric Jameson writes, summing up this connection and the challenge it poses: "The market is in human nature' is the proposition that cannot be allowed to stand unchallenged; in my opinion, it is the most crucial terrain of ideological struggle in our time." (Jameson, 1991: 263)

A critical examination of neoliberalism must address this transformation of its discursive deployment, as a new understanding of human nature and social existence rather than a political program. Thus it is not enough to contrast neoliberalism as a political program, analyzing its policies in terms of success or failure. An examination of neoliberalism entails a reexamination of the fundamental problematic of ideology, the intersection of power, concepts, modes of existence and subjectivity. It is in confronting neoliberalism that the seemingly abstract debates of the last thirty years, debates between poststructuralists such as Michel Foucault and neo-Marxists such as Antonio Negri about the nature of power and the relation between “ideologies” or “discourses” and material existence, cease to be abstract doctrines and become concrete ways of comprehending and transforming the present. Foucault’s lectures on neoliberalism do not only extend his own critical project into new areas, they also serve to demonstrate the importance of grasping the present by examining the way in which the truth and subjectivity are produced.

### **Homo Economicus: The Subject of Neoliberalism**

The nexus between the production of a particular conception of human nature, a particular formation of subjectivity, and a particular political ideology, a particular way of thinking about politics is at the center of Michel Foucault’s research. As much as Foucault characterized his own project as studying “...the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects,” this process has always intersected with regimes of power/knowledge (Foucault, 1982: 208). Thus, it would appear that Foucault’s work takes up exactly what writers on neoliberalism find to be so vexing: the manner in which neoliberalism is not just a manner of governing states or economies, but is intimately tied to the government of the individual, to a particular manner of living. However, it is well known that Foucault’s research primarily views this relation from ancient Greece through the nineteenth century, leaving modern developments such as neoliberalism unaddressed. While this is the general pattern of Foucault’s work, in the late seventies he devoted a year of his lectures at the *Collège de France* to the topic of neoliberalism. These lectures, published as *The Birth of Biopolitics*, are something of an anomaly in part because of this shift into the late-twentieth century and also because unlike other lecture courses, at least those that have been published in recent years, on “abnormals,” “psychiatric power” and “the hermeneutics of the subject,” the material from these lectures never made it into Foucault’s published works.



In order to frame Foucault's analysis it is useful to begin with how he sees the distinction between liberalism and neoliberalism. For Foucault, this difference has to do with the different ways in which they each focus on economic activity. Classical liberalism focused on exchange, on what Adam Smith called mankind's tendency to "barter, truck, and exchange." It naturalized the market as a system with its own rationality, its own interest, and its own specific efficiency, arguing ultimately for its superior efficiency as a distributor of goods and services. The market became a space of autonomy that had to be carved out of the state through the unconditional right of private property. What Foucault stresses in his understanding, is the way in which the market becomes more than just a specific institution or practice to the point where it has become the basis for a reinterpretation and thus a critique of state power. Classical liberalism makes exchange the general matrix of society. It establishes a homology: just as relations in the marketplace can be understood as an exchange of one good for another, the state, or the social contract, can be understood as an exchange of certain freedoms for a set of rights and liberties.<sup>1</sup> Neoliberalism, according to Foucault, extends the process of making economic activity a general matrix of social and political relations, but it takes as its focus not exchange but competition (Foucault, 2008: 12). What the two forms of liberalism, the "classical" and "neo" share, according to Foucault, is a general idea of "homo economicus," that is, the way in which they place a particular "anthropology" of man as an economic subject at the basis of politics. What changes is the emphasis from an anthropology of exchange to one of competition. The shift from exchange to competition has profound effects: while exchange was considered to be natural, competition is understood by the neo-liberals of the twentieth century to be an artificial relation that must be protected against the tendency for markets to form monopolies and interventions by the state. Competition necessitates a constant intervention on the part of the state, not on the market, but on the conditions of the market (Foucault, 2008: 139).

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<sup>1</sup> As Foucault writes on this point: "The combination of the savage and exchange is, I think, basic to juridical thought, and not only to eighteenth century theories of right—we constantly find the savage exchange couple from the eighteenth century theory of right to the anthropology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In both the juridical thought of the eighteenth century and the anthropology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the savage is essentially a man who exchanges." (Foucault, 2003: 194)

What is more important for us is the way in which this shift in “anthropology” from “homo economicus” as an exchanging creature to a competitive creature, or rather as a creature whose tendency to compete must be fostered, entails a general shift in the way in which human beings make themselves and are made subjects. First, neoliberalism entails a massive expansion of the field and scope of economics. Foucault cites Gary Becker on this point: “Economics is the science which studies human behavior as relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternate uses” (Foucault, 2008: 235). Everything for which human beings attempt to realize their ends, from marriage, to crime, to expenditures on children, can be understood “economically” according to a particular calculation of cost for benefit. Secondly, this entails a massive redefinition of “labor” and the “worker.” The worker has become “human capital”. Salary or wages become the revenue that is earned on an initial investment, an investment in one’s skills or abilities. Any activity that increases the capacity to earn income, to achieve satisfaction, even migration, the crossing of borders from one country to another, is an investment in human capital. Of course a large portion of “human capital,” one’s body, brains, and genetic material, not to mention race or class, is simply given and cannot be improved. Foucault argues that this natural limit is something that exists to be overcome through technologies; from plastic surgery to possible genetic engineering that make it possible to transform one’s initial investment. As Foucault writes summarizing this point of view: “Homo economicus is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself” (Foucault, 2008: 226).

Foucault’s object in his analysis is not to bemoan this as a victory for capitalist ideology, the point at which the “ruling ideas” have truly become the ideas of the “ruling class,” so much so that everyone from a minimum wage employee to a C.E.O considers themselves to be entrepreneurs. Nor is his task to critique the fundamental increase of the scope of economic rationality in neo-liberal economics: the assertion that economics is coextensive with all of society, all of rationality, and that it is economics “all the way down.” Rather, Foucault takes the neo-liberal ideal to be a new regime of truth, and a new way in which people are made subjects: *homo economicus* is fundamentally different subject, structured by different motivations and governed by different principles, than *homo juridicus*, or the legal subject of the state. Neoliberalism constitutes a new mode of “governmentality,” a manner, or a mentality, in which people are governed and govern themselves. The operative terms of this governmentality are no longer rights and laws but interest, investment and

competition. Whereas rights exist to be exchanged, and are some sense constituted through the original exchange of the social contract, interest is irreducible and inalienable, it cannot be exchanged. The state channels flows of interest and desire by making desirable activities inexpensive and undesirable activities costly, counting on the fact that subjects calculate their interests. As a form of governmentality, neoliberalism would seem paradoxically to govern without governing; that is, in order to function its subjects must have a great deal of freedom to act—to choose between competing strategies.

The new governmental reason needs freedom; therefore, the new art of government consumes freedom. It must produce it, it must organize it. The new art of government therefore appears as the management of freedom, not in the sense of the imperative: “be free,” with the immediate contradiction that this imperative may contain...[T]he liberalism we can describe as the art of government formed in the eighteenth century entails at its heart a productive/destructive relationship with freedom. Liberalism must produce freedom, but this very act entails the establishment of limitations, controls, forms of coercion, and obligations relying on threats, etcetera. (Foucault, 2008: 63).

These freedoms, the freedoms of the market, are not the outside of politics, of governmentality, as its limit, but rather are an integral element of its strategy. As a mode of governmentality, neoliberalism operates on interests, desires, and aspirations rather than through rights and obligations; it does not directly mark the body, as sovereign power, or even curtail actions, as disciplinary power; rather, it acts on the conditions of actions. Thus, neoliberal governmentality follows a general trajectory of intensification. This trajectory follows a fundamental paradox; as power becomes less restrictive, less corporeal, it also becomes more intense, saturating the field of actions, and possible actions.<sup>2</sup>

Foucault limits his discussion of neoliberalism to its major theoretical texts and paradigms, following its initial formulation in post-war Germany through to its most comprehensive version in the Chicago School. Whereas Foucault’s early analyses are often remembered for their analysis of practical documents, the description of the *panopticon* or the practice of

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<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Nealon has developed the logic of intensification in Foucault, arguing that this can be seen in the transition from disciplinary power to biopower; the former operates through specific sites and identities, while the latter operates on sexuality that is diffuse throughout society, coextensive with subjectivity (Nealon, 2008: 46). A similar point could be raised with respect to neoliberalism.

the confessional, the lectures on neoliberalism predominantly follow the major theoretical discussions. This is in some sense a limitation of the lecture course format, or at least a reflection that this material was never developed into a full study. Any analysis that is faithful to the spirit and not just the letter of Foucault's text would focus on neoliberalism not just as a theory but as a practice, diffused throughout the economy, state, and society. As Thomas Lemke argues, neoliberalism is a political project that attempts to create a social reality that it suggests already exists, stating that competition is the basis of social relations while fostering those same relations (Lemke, 2002: 60). The contemporary trend away from long term labor contracts, towards temporary and part-time labor, is not only an effective economic strategy, freeing corporations from contracts and the expensive commitments of health care and other benefits, it is an effective strategy of subjectification as well. It encourages workers to see themselves not as "workers" in a political sense, who have something to gain through solidarity and collective organization, but as "companies of one." They become individuals for whom every action, from taking courses on a new computer software application to having their teeth whitened, can be considered an investment in human capital. As Eric Alliez and Michel Feher write: "Corporations' massive recourse to subcontracting plays a fundamental role in this to the extent that it turns the workers' desire for independence...into a 'business spirit' that meets capital's growing need for satellites." (Alliez and Feher, 1986: 349) Neoliberalism is not simply an ideology in the pejorative sense of the term, or a belief that one could elect to have or not have, but is itself produced by strategies, tactics, and policies that create subjects of interest, locked in competition.

Because Foucault brackets what could be considered the "ideological" dimension of neoliberalism, its connection with the global hegemony of not only capitalism, but specifically a new regime of capitalist accumulation, his lectures have little to say about its historical conditions. Foucault links the original articulation of neoliberalism to a particular reaction to Nazi Germany. As Foucault argues, the original neo-liberals, the "Ordo-liberals," considered Nazi Germany not to be an effect of capitalism. But the most extreme version of what is opposed to capitalism and the market—planning. While Foucault's analysis captures the particular "fear of the state" that underlies neoliberalism, its belief that any planning, any intervention against competition, is tantamount to totalitarianism. It however does not account for the dominance of neoliberalism in the present, specifically its dominance as a particular

“technology of the self,” a particular mode of subjection. At the same time, Foucault offers the possibility of a different understanding of the history of neoliberalism when he argues that neoliberalism, or the neo-liberal subject as *homo economicus*, or *homo entrepreneur*, emerges to address a particular lacunae in liberal economic thought, and that is labor.

In this sense neoliberalism rushes to fill the same void, the same gap, that Marx attempted to fill, without reference to Marx, and with very different results (Foucault, 2008: 221). Marx and neo-liberals agree that although classical economic theory examined the sphere of exchange, the market, it failed to enter the “hidden abode of production” examining how capital is produced. Of course the agreement ends there, because what Marx and neo-liberals find in labor is fundamentally different: for Marx labor is the sphere of exploitation while for the neo-liberals, as we have seen, labor is no sooner introduced as a problem than the difference between labor and capital is effaced through the theory of “human capital.”<sup>3</sup> Neoliberalism scrambles and exchanges the terms of opposition between “worker” and “capitalist.” To quote Etienne Balibar, “The capitalist is defined as worker, as an ‘entrepreneur’; the worker, as the bearer of a capacity, of a human capital” (Balibar, 1994: 53). Labor is no longer limited to the specific sites of the factory or the workplace, but is any activity that works towards desired ends. The terms “labor” and “human capital” intersect, overcoming in terminology their longstanding opposition; the former becomes the activity and the latter becomes the effects of the activity, its history. From this intersection the discourse of the economy becomes an entire way of life, a common sense in which every action--crime,

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<sup>3</sup> In *The Birth of Biopolitics* Foucault argues that Marx filled this void with an “anthropology” of labor. This is similar to the critique that Foucault develops in “Truth and Juridical Forms,” in which he argues that Marx posited labor as the “concrete essence of man.” As Foucault writes: “So I don’t think we can simply accept the traditional Marxist analysis, which assumes that, labor being man’s concrete essence, the capitalist system is what transforms labor into profit, into hyperprofit or surplus value. The fact is capitalism penetrates much more deeply into our existence. That system, as it was established in the nineteenth century, was obliged to elaborate a set of political techniques, techniques of power, by which man was tied to something like labor—a set of techniques by which people’s bodies and time would become labor power and labor time so as to be effectively used and thereby transformed into hyper profit” (Foucault, 2000: 86). This idea, of “capillary power relations” that turn man into a subject of labor, is an idea which Foucault sometimes develops as a critique and at other times attributes to Marx, see for example “Les Mailles du pouvoir” and less explicitly *Discipline and Punish*.

marriage, higher education and so on--can be charted according to a calculus of maximum output for minimum expenditure; it can be seen as an investment in human capital. Thus situating Marx and neoliberalism with respect to a similar problem makes it possible to grasp something of the politics of neoliberalism, which through a generalization of the idea of the “entrepreneur,” “investment” and “risk” beyond the realm of finance capital to every quotidian relation, effaces the very fact of exploitation. Neoliberalism can be considered a particular version of “capitalism without capitalism,” a way of maintaining not only private property but the existing distribution of wealth in capitalism while simultaneously doing away with the antagonism and social insecurity of capitalism, in this case paradoxically by extending capitalism, at least its symbols, terms, and logic, to all of society. The opposition between capitalist and worker has been effaced not by a transformation of *the mode of production*, a new organization of the production and distribution of wealth, but by the mode of subjection, a *new production of subjectivity*. Thus, neoliberalism entails a very specific extension of the economy across all of society; it is not, as Marx argued, because everything rests on an economic base (at least in the last instance) that the effects of the economy are extended across all of society, rather it is an economic perspective, that of the market, that becomes coextensive with all of society. As Christian Laval argues, all actions are seen to conform to the fundamental economic ideas of self-interest, of greatest benefit for least possible cost. It is not the structure of the economy that is extended across society but the subject of economic thinking, its implicit anthropology (Laval, 2007: 17).

### **Resisting the Present: Towards a Criticism of Neoliberalism**

Neoliberalism is thus a “restoration” not only of class power, of capitalism as the only possible economic system, it is a restoration of capitalism as synonymous with rationality. Thus, the question remains, why now, or at least why over the last thirty years has capitalism taken this neo-liberal turn? If Foucault’s invocation of the specter of Nazi Germany is insufficient to account for the specific historical formation of capitalism, the opposition to Marx does little to help clarify the dominance of neoliberalism now. Somewhat paradoxically this question can be at least partially answered by looking at one of the few points of intersection between Marx and neoliberalism.

In the *Grundrisse*, Marx does not use the term “human capital,” but fixed capital, a term generally used to refer to machinery, factories, and other investments in the means of production to refer to the subjectivity, the subjective powers of the worker. In general Marx understood the progression of capital to be a process by which the skills, knowledge, and know-how of workers were gradually incorporated into machinery, into fixed capital, reducing the laborer to an unskilled and ultimately replaceable cog in a machine. This is “proletarianization” the process by which capitalism produces its gravediggers in a class of impoverished workers who have nothing to lose but their chains. In the *Grundrisse*, however, Marx addresses a fundamentally different possibility, capital’s exploitation of not just the physical powers of the body, but the general social knowledge spread throughout society and embodied in each individual. This is what Marx refers to as the “general intellect”—the diffused social knowledge of society. This knowledge, the capacity to use various languages, protocols, and symbolic systems, is largely produced outside of work. As Marx writes: “The saving of labor time is equal to an increase of free time, i.e. time for the full development of the individual, which in turn reacts back upon the productive power of labor as itself the greatest productive power. From the standpoint of the direct production process it can be regarded as the production of *fixed capital*, this fixed capital being man himself” (Marx, 1973: 712). Marx’s deviation from the standard terminology of his own corpus, terminology that designates the worker as labor power (or living labor), the machine or factory as fixed capital, and money as circulating capital, is ultimately revealing. It reveals something of a future that Marx could barely envision, a future that has become our present: the real subsumption of society by capital. This subsumption involves not only the formation of what Marx referred to as a specifically capitalist mode of production, but also the incorporation of all subjective potential, the capacity to communicate, to feel, to create, to think, into productive powers for capital. Capital no longer simply exploits labor, understood as the physical capacity to transform objects, but puts to work the capacities to create and communicate that traverse social relations. It is possible to say that with real subsumption capital has no outside, there is no relationship that cannot be transformed into a commodity, but at the same time capital is nothing but outside, production takes place outside of the factory and the firm, in various social relationships. Because of this fundamental displacement subjectivity becomes paramount, subjectivity itself becomes productive and it is this same subjectivity that must be controlled.

For Antonio Negri there is a direct relationship between real subsumption as a transformation of the capitalist mode of production and neoliberalism as a transformation of the presentation of capitalism. It is not simply that neoliberalism works to efface the fundamental division between worker and capitalist, between wages and capital, through the production of neoliberal subjectivity. After all this opposition, this antagonism has preexisted neoliberalism by centuries. Neoliberalism is a discourse and practice that is aimed to curtail the powers of labor that are distributed across all of society—at the exact moment in which all of social existence becomes labor, or potential labor, neoliberalism constructs the image of a society of capitalists, of entrepreneurs. As production moves from the closed space of the factory to become distributed across all of social space, encompassing all spheres of cultural and social existence, neoliberalism presents an image of society as a market, effacing production altogether (Hardt and Negri, 1994: 226). This underscores the difference between neoliberalism as a form of power and the disciplinary power at work in the closed spaces of the factory. If disciplinary power worked by confining and fixing bodies to the production apparatuses, neoliberal power works by dispersing bodies and individuals through privatization and isolation. Deregulation, the central term and political strategy of neoliberalism, is not the absence of governing, or regulating, but a form of governing through isolation and dispersion (Negri, 1989: 99). As more and more wealth is produced by the collective social powers of society, neoliberalism presents us with an image of society made up of self-interested individuals. For Negri, neoliberalism and the idea of human capital is a misrepresentation of the productive powers of society. “The only problem is that extreme liberalization of the economy reveals its opposite, namely that the social and productive environment is not made up of atomized individuals...the real environment is made up of collective individuals” (Negri, 1989: 2006). In Negri’s analysis, the relation between neoliberalism and real subsumption takes on the characteristics of a Manichean opposition. We are all workers or we are all capitalists: either view society as an extension of labor across all social spheres, from the factory to the school to the home, and across all aspects of human existence, from the work of the hands to the mind, or view society as a logic of competition and investment that encompasses all human relationships. While Negri’s presentation has an advantage over Foucault’s lectures in that it grasps the historical formation of neoliberalism against the backdrop of a specific transformation of capital, in some sense following Foucault’s tendency to present disciplinary power and biopower against the backdrop of specific changes in the economic organization of



society, it does so by almost casting neoliberalism as an ideology in the pejorative sense of the term. It would appear that for Negri real subsumption is the truth of society, and neoliberalism is only a misrepresentation of that truth. As Thomas Lemke has argued, Foucault's idea of governmentality, is argued against such a division that posits actual material reality on one side and its ideological misrepresentation on the other. A governmentality is a particular mentality, a particular manner of governing, that is actualized in habits, perceptions, and subjectivity. Governmentality situates actions and conceptions on the same plane of immanence (Lemke, 2002: 54). Which is to say, that any criticism of neoliberalism as governmentality must not focus on its errors, on its myopic conception of social existence, but on its particular production of truth. For Foucault, we have to take seriously the manner in which the fundamental understanding of individuals as governed by interest and competition is not just an ideology that can be refused and debunked, but is an intimate part of how our lives and subjectivity are structured.

Despite Negri's tendency to lapse back into an opposition between labor and ideology, his object raises important questions echoed by other critics of neoliberalism. What is lost in neoliberalism is the critical distance opened up between different spheres and representations of subjectivity, not only the difference between work and the market, as in Marxism, but also the difference between the citizen and the economic subject, as in classical liberalism. All of these differences are effaced as one relation; that of economic self-interest, or competition, replaces the multiple spaces and relations of worker, citizen, and economic subject of consumption. To put the problem in Foucault's terms, what has disappeared in neoliberalism is the tactical polyvalence of discourse; everything is framed in terms of interests, freedoms and risks (Foucault, 1978: 101). As Wendy Brown argues, one can survey the quotidian effects or practices of governmentality in the manner in which individualized/market based solutions appear in lieu of collective political solutions: gated communities for concerns about security and safety; bottled water for concerns about water purity; and private schools (or vouchers) for failing public schools, all of which offer the opportunity for individuals to opt out rather than address political problems (Brown, 2006: 704). Privatization is not just neoliberalism's strategy for dealing with the public sector, what David Harvey calls accumulation by dispossession, but a consistent element of its particular form of governmentality, its ethos, everything becomes privatized, institutions, structures, issues, and problems that used to constitute the public (Harvey, 2005: 154). It is privatization all the way

down. For Brown, neoliberalism entails a massive de-democratization, as terms such as the public good, rights and debate, no longer have any meaning. “The model neoliberal citizen is one who strategizes for her or himself among various social, political, and economic options, not one who strives with others to alter or organize these options” (Brown, 2005: 43). Thus, while it is possible to argue that neoliberalism is a more flexible, an open form of power as opposed to the closed spaces of disciplines, a form of power that operates on freedoms, on a constitutive multiplicity, it is in some sense all the more closed in that as a form of governmentality, as a political rationality, it is without an outside. It does not encounter any tension with a competing logic of worker or citizen, with a different articulation of subjectivity. States, corporations, individuals are all governed by the same logic, that of interest and competition.

Foucault’s development, albeit partial, of account of neoliberalism as governmentality has as its major advantage a clarification of the terrain on which neoliberalism can be countered. It is not enough to simply oppose neoliberalism as ideology, revealing the truth of social existence that it misses, or to enumerate its various failings as policy. Rather any opposition to neoliberalism must take seriously its effectiveness, the manner in which it has transformed work subjectivity and social relationships. As Foucault argues, neoliberalism operates less on actions, directly curtailing them, then on the condition and effects of actions, on the sense of possibility. The reigning ideal of interest and the calculations of cost and benefit do not so much limit what one can do, neoliberal thinkers are famously indifferent to prescriptive ideals, examining the illegal drug trade as a more or less rational investment, but limit the sense of what is possible. Specifically the ideal of the fundamentally self-interested individual curtails any collective transformation of the conditions of existence. It is not that such actions are not prohibited, restricted by the dictates of a sovereign or the structures of disciplinary power, they are not seen as possible, closed off by a society made up of self-interested individuals. It is perhaps no accident that one of the most famous political implementers of neoliberal reforms, Margaret Thatcher, used the slogan, “there is no alternative,” legitimating neoliberalism based on the stark absence of possibilities. Similarly, and as part of a belated response to the former Prime Minister, it also perhaps no accident that the slogan of the famous Seattle protests against the IMF and World Bank was, “another world is possible,” and it is very often the sense of a possibility of not only another world, but of another way of organizing

politics that is remembered, the image of turtles and teamsters marching hand and hand, when those protests are referred to (Lazzarato, 2004: 19). It is also this sense of possibility that the present seems to be lacking; it is difficult to imagine let alone enact a future other than a future dominated by interest and the destructive vicissitudes of competition. A political response to neoliberalism must meet it on its terrain that of production of subjectivity, freedom and possibility

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A SEVENTIES THING:  
ON THE LIMITS OF FOUCAULT'S  
NEOLIBERALISM COURSE  
FOR UNDERSTANDING THE PRESENT

MICHAEL C. BEHRENT

The recent publication of Foucault's 1979 lectures on neoliberalism seems destined to confirm the philosopher's oracular prescience. As David Harvey has argued in a recent study, neoliberalism's origins lie in a series of transformations occurring in the late 1970s: the end of the dollar's gold convertibility, the emergence of anti-inflationary policies, and monetarism's ascent as the dominant economic paradigm in many industrialized nations.<sup>1</sup> Delivered in the very midst of these changes, *The Birth of Biopolitics* (as the lecture series is named<sup>2</sup>) appears, in retrospect, to be an extraordinary intellectual feat: at the very moment when the political and economic headwinds were changing direction, Foucault not only noticed—he had already, it seems, equipped himself with the theoretical tools to make sense of what was happening. It is, moreover, tempting to discern in these lectures the distant roar of battle: true to form, Foucault would appear to have provided us not only with a theory of the new economic order, but also a strategy for resisting it. At a time when neoliberalism has become, for many, the dominant political technology of our globalized world, what could be more fortunate—and timely—than a volume by the great “master of suspicion” dedicated to unmasking its insidious ways?

I would like, however, to challenge the assumption that what Foucault had to say about neoliberalism in 1979 is relevant to understanding neoliberalism thirty years later. My argument is, in the first place,

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

<sup>2</sup> Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique*. These lectures have been recently translated as *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

historical: to comprehend what Foucault was doing in 1979, we must abandon the regrettably ahistorical character of most American Foucault scholarship by reconstructing the historical context in which Foucault's lectures were delivered—namely, France in the 1970s. As many historians now recognize, the seventies were, for France, a decade marked by a number of decisive transitions and turning points that shaped the milieu in which intellectuals like Foucault thought: the declining appeal of Marxism, prolonged economic crisis, a renaissance of economic liberalism, and the emergence of a left critique of French socialism. Only against this background do his pronouncements become meaningful.

Yet once this historical context has been clarified, something unexpected occurs: we find a Foucault who is remarkably sanguine about neoliberalism. This notably positive assessment of neoliberalism, on the part of a philosopher known for his suspicion of power in all its forms, was not exactly a conversion. Rather, the favor that Foucault bestowed upon neoliberalism amounted to a strategic endorsement necessitated by contemporary intellectual politics. But it remains an endorsement just the same—and this should serve as a warning to those who are tempted to enlist Foucault into the struggle against neoliberalism. Rather than speculating about a “Foucault for the twenty-first century,” I will make the case for a Foucault firmly rooted in the late twentieth-century, one whose fascination with neoliberalism was very much a seventies thing.

### **Neoliberalism's Appeal (I): An Evolving Ideological Market**

To understand Foucault's attraction to neoliberalism, we must be careful not to imagine him as motivated by purely scholarly concerns. He did not, as it were, survey the international economic stage, take note of neoliberalism's entry, and promptly set out to analyze it. Rather, his interest in neoliberalism must be seen as an episode in the shifting intellectual politics of the 1970s. This was, in France, a period of profound—if often productive—ideological confusion. At a time when many longstanding political assumptions were suddenly in doubt, what one might call the ideological market was in a state of flux: among intellectuals, there was a growing demand for new frameworks for thinking about politics, at the same time that the difficult transitions that France was undergoing—notably the collapse of the post-war economy—disrupted the supply of ideological goods. One consequence of this shifting ideological market was Foucault's flirtation with neoliberalism.

The intellectual confusion of the seventies resulted, in the first place, from a crisis on the left. Though the student and worker strikes of May 1968 led many to believe that revolution was just around the corner, by the seventies, a number of former radicals decided, after a period of disappointment and self-questioning, to launch an intellectual campaign against Marxism. The charge was led by Bernard-Henri Lévy and André Glucksmann, dubbed the “new philosophers” by the media; simultaneously, a more profound—and, arguably, influential—critique of Marxism was undertaken by the so-called “anti-totalitarian” intellectuals gathered around François Furet, the revisionist historian of the French Revolution. Foucault’s political thinking in these years participated in this broader realignment. Though he had long distanced himself from the French Communist Party, Foucault had, at the beginning of the seventies, been close to members of the Maoist *Gauche prolétarienne* (GP). But by the mid-seventies, he, too, had lost patience with the toll that Marxism was inflicting on French intellectual and political life. He publicly sided with the “new philosophers,” praising one of Glucksmann’s books in *Le nouvel observateur* in 1977.<sup>3</sup> The following year, he denounced the penchant of French intellectuals for “hyper-Marxism,” while bemoaning “the pulverization of Marxism into little bodies of doctrine”—each with less to say than the other about the pressing issues of the day.<sup>4</sup>

The bewilderment of the post-Marxist left was compounded by the onset of prolonged economic crisis. The 1973 oil embargo, which brought the “Thirty Glorious Years” of post-war economic growth to an abrupt conclusion (in France as well as other industrialized economies), triggered rampant inflation, mass unemployment, and ultimately widespread political cynicism, as successive governments proved incapable of restoring the prosperity to which many had grown accustomed. The economic crisis also upended the ideological landscape: it offered, in particular, an unexpected opportunity to the market-friendly economists known as “neoliberals,” who had long been critical of prevailing Keynesian orthodoxies. In France, well before Margaret Thatcher’s triumph in Britain in 1979 and Ronald Reagan’s victory in the United States in 1980, free-market solutions to healing the economy were tested

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<sup>3</sup> Foucault, “La grande colère des faits,” review of André Glucksmann’s *Les maîtres penseurs* [1977]. Foucault’s relationship with Marx, particularly from around 1975 on, is of course quite complex. While frequently critical of Marx, Foucault also shows a more conciliatory attitude at times. See, for instance, his lecture “Les mailles du pouvoir.”

<sup>4</sup> Foucault, “Entretien avec Michel Foucault,” 80, 81.

by Raymond Barre, a liberal economist and translator of Friedrich Hayek, who was appointed prime minister in 1976. Perhaps the most radical measure of Barre's economic plan was the elimination of longstanding price caps on several essential staples.

Yet the rehabilitation of free-market liberalism in the seventies context owed as much to its intellectual appeal as to its purported economic efficacy (which, under Barre, produced modest results at best). This is evident in the success of a primer on neoliberalism that appeared in 1978 under the title *Demain le capitalisme (Tomorrow, Capitalism)*, written by a young economist named Henri Lepage. The book was designed to introduce French audiences to recent American economic thought, including the Chicago School, the "human capital" theorists, and libertarianism. Indeed, in his 1979 lectures on American neoliberalism, Foucault was essentially commenting on Lepage's summaries. But the French economist's intent was also polemical. At a time when disillusionment with Marxism was spawning interest in liberalism, Lepage, sensing an opportunity, made the case that it was pointless to defend human rights without embracing capitalism.

[T]hose who defend liberalism on a political level [must become] conscious of the tight bonds that unite liberal philosophy to the scientific foundations of *capitalist* society. Those who adhere to a liberal philosophy must cease to have a guilty conscience about the connection between liberalism and capitalism...<sup>5</sup>

Thus, a dwindling faith in Marxism and rising economic anxieties cracked open the door leading to economic liberalism—a door that in French political discourse, had long been shut.

Central to the free-market liberals' assault on Keynesian orthodoxies was the claim that the French state's interventionist and *dirigiste* habits did more to exacerbate the current economic hardships than to resolve them. Such arguments were not, however, confined to the right (where they were far from dominant); they also found a distant echo in a current of French socialism known as the Second Left. The Second Left objected to the expansive role that mainstream socialism (i.e., the "First Left") gave to the state in its efforts to build a more equitable society. Swimming against this current, the Second Left sought to free society from the state, allowing it to reorganize itself on the basis of "self-management" (or *autogestion*)—

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<sup>5</sup> Lepage, *Demain le capitalisme*, 13.



that is, the spontaneous knack for self-government exhibited by workers and voluntary associations. The movement's chief theorist was a young union activist named Pierre Rosanvallon, who, in addition to publishing several seminal manifestos, regularly participated in Foucault's seminar at the Collège de France. After reading one of Rosanvallon's essays, Foucault confided that "he completely recognized himself in it."<sup>6</sup> In 1977, Foucault participated in a conference organized by Rosanvallon to promote Second Left themes. While remaining resolutely socialist, the Second Left's desire to unleash society's self-managing talents meant that it could at least grasp the force of neoliberal critiques of the state, however loath it was to draw the same political consequences. At a time when the "economic and social thought of Marxist origin has run out of steam," Rosanvallon explained, free-market liberalism has "a real capacity of intellectual seduction."<sup>7</sup> Without endorsing neoliberalism, the Second Left contributed (albeit from a dramatically different political perspective) to its broader challenge to prevailing ideological orthodoxies, particularly in their statist and socialist forms.

The period in which neoliberalism piqued Foucault's interest was thus—one of profound ideological flux. Marxism was under assault; an unrelenting economic crisis was revealing the nostrums of post-war economic policy to be intellectually bankrupt; and mainstream socialism was under attack from the left as well as the right for its statist proclivities. Foucault's interest in neoliberalism was ultimately more a consequence of this fluid ideological situation than of an "objective" finding regarding the changing international economic order. For those intent on knocking Marxism from its intellectual pedestal, the arguments advanced by neoliberals were strategically appealing—especially if, as the Second Left demonstrated, there were solid socialist reasons for being suspicious of the state. Yet if this context constitutes the necessary cause for Foucault's turn to neoliberalism, its sufficient cause must be found in the internal imperatives of his own philosophical evolution.

### **Neoliberalism's Appeal (II): An Alternative Account of Political Modernity**

An additional reason for neoliberalism's draw on Foucault in the late seventies was that it assisted him in carrying out a necessary revision in

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<sup>6</sup> Rosanvallon, "Un intellectuel en politique."

<sup>7</sup> Rosanvallon, *La crise de l'état-providence*, 97.

his own political thought. For shortly after its publication in 1975, he had begun to doubt some of the main tenets of what is perhaps his best known book: *Discipline and Punish*. In this genealogy of the modern prison, Foucault had detected, amidst apparently enlightened nineteenth-century penal reform projects, the deployment of an insidious new form of power that he called “discipline,” which individualizes subjects to survey their bodies, normalize their behavior, and regulate their movements. Yet as early as his 1976 course (“Society Must Be Defended”), Foucault began to question his claim that discipline was the definitive form of power in modern society. In the eighteenth century, he now contended, “something new” had happened: the emergence of a technology of power that he explicitly described as “non-disciplinary.”<sup>8</sup> Foucault dubbed this new form “biopower,” for rather than seeking to “make die and let live,” as had traditional royal power, it sought to “make live and let die.” Yet by his 1978 course (“Security, Territory, Population”), Foucault had begun to alter the term’s meaning: at the very moment when French newspapers were debating Barre’s and Thatcher’s neoliberal remedies, Foucault now contended that biopower’s most characteristic form lay not in the politicization of medical knowledge and the life science (as the term has often been understood), but in economic liberalism. The neoliberal resurgence of the late seventies appears, in short, to have bolstered Foucault’s doubts about the limitations of understanding modern power solely through the prism of discipline.

In the 1976 course, even while stressing biopower’s novelty, Foucault had maintained that discipline and biopower often operate hand-in-hand. By the 1978 course, however, he increasingly emphasized the ways in which biopower breaks with the disciplinary model—at the very moment, in other words, when he was claiming that economic liberalism was biopower’s most paradigmatic form. As an example, he turned to the eighteenth-century Physiocrats, a school of proto-liberal French economists. What the Physiocrats illustrate, Foucault argued, is that whereas power directed at individuals (i.e., discipline) is capable of increasing almost indefinitely, power targeting populations (that is, biopower) must limit itself to be effective. Consequently, rather than supplementing discipline, Physiocracy proposes a clear alternative to it: where discipline “regulates everything,” Physiocracy “lets things be.”<sup>9</sup> Moreover, government operating on the principle of “letting things be”—

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<sup>8</sup> Foucault, “*Il faut défendre la société*,” 215.

<sup>9</sup> Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population*, 47.

or “*laissez-faire*,” as the Physiocrats themselves called it—must necessarily integrate a conception of freedom into its political calculus, at least to the extent that freedom means non-interference. This is apparent in the Physiocrats’ solution to ending grain shortages. One must resist, they argued, the disciplinary urge to impose caps on prices and to force peasants to bring their grain to the market; instead, one must let prices float, allowing the market to work its wonders: grain hoarders and exporters, eager to cash in while scarcity keeps prices high, will flood the market, thus forcing down prices and feeding the hungry. Once again, Foucault’s erudition appears to have drawn inspiration from contemporary politics: in a speech delivered weeks before Foucault’s lecture, Raymond Barre, while campaigning for upcoming parliamentary elections, called for “a return to the liberty and stability of prices, within the framework of an active policy of competition, ... [and the replacement of] the 1945 ordinance on prices [which imposed caps on essential staples] by legislation that is better adapted to a modern and open economy.”<sup>10</sup> Though Barre no doubt embraced it as well, it was nonetheless the Physiocrats, Foucault believed, who had stumbled on liberalism’s key insight: that one governs best by governing least.

Yet one might wonder if Foucault’s claim that economic liberalism is power’s most contemporary incarnation should be taken as an endorsement of it. After all, was he not just as wary as of economic liberalism as he had been of discipline? This objection is not borne out by Foucault’s lectures. In the 1978 course, he confessed that he once believed that liberalism had a dark side—that the liberties it espoused were, as he put it, “weighed...down with a disciplinary technique which...limited liberty considerably.” Discipline, in short, was liberalism’s not-so-silver lining. But now he asserted: “I believe that I was wrong”<sup>11</sup>—disowning, in a short sentence, one of *Discipline and Punish*’s key arguments. Liberty is not a con, a form of false consciousness that blinds us to our own domination. Rather, under biopower, liberty becomes a pre-requisite, a necessary condition for the exercise of governmental authority. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault famously proposed the Panopticon, a prison in which every inmate is under constant surveillance, as a metaphor for modern society. But now, Foucault described the Panopticon as “the oldest dream of the oldest sovereign.”<sup>12</sup> In economic liberalism, Foucault thus proposed an alternative to the vision of political modernity that he had

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<sup>10</sup> Barre, *Objectifs d’action*, 86.

<sup>11</sup> Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population*, 50.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

sketched out in 1975. Modern power, he now claimed, is defined not by its aspiration to control everything, but by the recognition that it is more effective when some authority slips through its fingers. As he explained the following year, liberalism “is shot through with the principle: “*On gouverne toujours trop*”<sup>13</sup>—one always governs too much. Though the ideological confusion of the seventies had made Foucault receptive to economic liberalism, it was his recognition that the free-market creed provides the clue to understanding power in its most modern form that made a thorough analysis of its most recent manifestations so relevant. Moreover, making economic liberalism rather than discipline the hallmark of political modernity had an impact on Foucault’s assessment of the present as well. Though he naturally never disowned his injunction that power in all its forms must be relentlessly critiqued, it is nonetheless remarkable—especially in light of French intellectuals’ well-established hostility to capitalism—that it was nothing less than an examination of economic liberalism that attuned Foucault to the “non-disciplinary” potentialities of modern power regimes. Having achieved this insight, it was only a matter of time before his tolerance for the mainstream left would start to wear thin.

### **Neoliberalism’s Appeal (III): The Critique of Socialism and Leftism**

If economic liberalism was, as Foucault now contended, the signal trait of modern politics, there could be little doubt that the French left was desperately antiquated. François Mitterrand’s Socialist Party, for instance, remained committed to a program of mass nationalizations that sought to place much of the private sector under the state’s tutelage. Moreover, between 1972 and 1978, the Socialist Party was allied for electoral purposes with the even more unreconstructed French Communist Party. As Michael Scott Christofferson has argued, the fear that the Socialist-Communist alliance could win at the polls—as it almost did in 1974 and 1978—motivated many intellectuals to assert that Marxism leads inexorably to totalitarianism (often by invoking Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s recently translated *The Gulag Archipelago*).<sup>14</sup>

Rather than launch a frontal assault, Foucault critiqued the French left more obliquely, by pointing, in 1979, to a more successful alternative from

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<sup>13</sup> Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 324.

<sup>14</sup> Christofferson, *French Intellectuals against the Left*.

across the Rhone: the West German economists known as the Ordoliberals. These liberal economists were known for their pivotal role in instigating the *Wirtschaftswunder*—the German economic miracle—as well as for fashioning the Federal Republic’s distinctive “social market economy.” Foucault found the Ordoliberals to be intriguingly paradoxical: they claimed that the free market alone could save civilization from the collectivist threat represented by the interventionist state, but also insisted that a free market could not function without the state’s *intervention*—for only the state could create a legal and social framework in which market competition could occur. Yet Foucault’s specific interest in invoking Ordoliberalism was to lay bare, by way of contrast, the disastrous statism that still plagued the French left. For thanks to the Ordoliberals, the German left had evolved along a different path. At its 1959 conference at Bad Godesberg, the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) jettisoned Marxism and embraced the tenets of Ordoliberalism. With this decision, Foucault argued, the SPD at last made its entry “into the game of governmentality.”<sup>15</sup> The SPD’s decision revealed an inherent problem within socialism: the fact that it lacks a distinctive approach to the art of governing. Socialists are brimming with ideas; but when they assume power, they must implement these ideas with techniques borrowed from other political traditions: from neoliberalism, in the case of the SPD, from the police state, in the case of Soviet socialism. Rather than governing, socialism privileges authenticity, that is, faithfulness to foundational texts—a concern that distracts it from understanding how institutions function. What the SPD had learned from Ordoliberalism—yet which still eluded the French left—was not how to love capitalism, but how to govern. Those on the left who believe that governing matters, Foucault cautioned, neglect neoliberalism at their own risk.

Claiming that socialism must come to terms with economic liberalism was audacious enough. But Foucault went further still: far from being a sinister new form of power, as some intellectuals were asserting, he claimed that neoliberalism was a political practice that was strikingly non-disciplinary. To the surprise of listeners accustomed to lectures on such edgy topics as insane asylums and hermaphrodites, Foucault revealed his wonkish side, regaling them with explanations of the “negative tax,” a policy first concocted by Milton Friedman in the early sixties (and later enacted in the US as the “earned income tax credit”). What intrigued Foucault about this policy was that it broke with the tendency of modern welfare policies to

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<sup>15</sup> Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique*, 92.

link payouts to behavior, rendering obsolete the longstanding distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor. With the negative tax, the state abandons its disciplinary interest in what beneficiaries spend and how hard they work; its concern is only that they have an income allowing them to play the economic game. Thus, Foucault concluded, American neoliberalism does not entail “the project of an exhaustively disciplinary society,” one that “encircle[es] individuals” and operates on “normative” principles. Rather, neoliberalism’s vision of society is founded on an “optimization of...differences” and “tolerance accorded to individuals and to minority practices,” making it “much less bureaucratic,” and “*much less disciplinary*” than its statist alternatives.<sup>16</sup>

Openness to “differences,” “tolerance” of individuals and minority practices, a retreat from discipline: these are not words that we typically associate with Foucault’s vision of the modern world. That he used them in 1979 to describe power in modern society reveals just how much his understanding of politics had changed since the publication of *Discipline and Punish*. All of which leads to the question: Was Foucault a true-believer, a convert to neoliberalism? It is tempting to imagine the once merciless detractor of power in all its forms embracing Milton Friedman and joining the vast right-wing conspiracy. But this conclusion would be mistaken. His endorsement of liberalism was—to use one of his favorite words—strategic. His attraction to liberalism was reflective of the broader transformation of the ideological supply and demand in the seventies. It also reflected his own evolving philosophical position, namely his recognition of the limits of understanding modern power solely through the lens of discipline. Finally, liberalism also allowed him to critique Marxism and the French left’s obsession with the state. Perhaps just as importantly, it offered him a basis upon which he could admonish his audiences to reconsider their knee-jerk suspicion of the dominant institutions of modern society. He did not ask them to “become” neoliberals, any more than he became one; rather, he was calling on them to discard the radical lenses that were blinding them from understanding their world.

### **Foucault’s Legacy: Neoliberalism’s Organic Intellectuals?**

Another reason that should make us cautious about the relevance of Foucault’s lectures cuts in a somewhat different direction. While Foucault’s

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 265.

thought has clearly inspired critics of neoliberal globalization—one thinks, notably of the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri—it has also influenced, at least in France, an intellectual current that is distinctly more sympathetic to contemporary capitalism. One should not, of course, directly associate Foucault with the views of his disciples. But even so, those who would turn to Foucault to find the theoretical tools to critique contemporary society should reflect on the fact that his thought has spawned an outlook far more favorable to the established order—one that might be called “right Foucauldianism.” However, the very possibility of such a rightward evolution must once again be found in the complex intellectual crucible of the seventies, in which Foucault’s own interest in neoliberalism was also piqued.

The most prominent of the “right Foucauldians” is François Ewald, who is perhaps best known in the United States as the editor of Foucault’s lectures and collected essays. After having met Foucault in Maoist circles in the early seventies, Ewald came to Paris, on Foucault’s invitation. Ewald has described his work with Foucault in these years as an episode in the story of post-sixties radicalism, during which “former militants [threw] themselves into the work of analyzing their engagement...not by way of psychoanalysis but through history, with, in the place of the couch, the Bibliothèque Nationale [the French National Library].” “Foucauldian genealogy,” he observes, “permitted us to emancipate ourselves from Marxism.”<sup>17</sup> For Ewald, Foucault’s emphasis on power helped these former militants to extend their conception of political struggles beyond the narrow focus on class conflict to which Marxism had confined it. For Ewald, however, this entailed not so much a broadening of the concept of revolution, but precisely the opposite: Foucault, he argued in 1977, had completely freed politics from any *de rigueur* “reference to the Revolution.”<sup>18</sup>

Where these insights led Ewald is quite astonishing, given standard assumptions about the political implications of Foucault’s thought. In 1986, two years after his mentor’s death, Ewald defended a thesis examining the development of social insurance in the late nineteenth century. After a tenuous stint in academia, his career took a surprising turn. In the early nineties, he decided not only to study insurers, but to join them: he was given a job as the house intellectual of the Fédération Française des Sociétés d’Assurance (FFSA)—the professional association

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<sup>17</sup> Ewald, “Société assurantielle et solidarité,” 119.

<sup>18</sup> Ewald, “Foucault, une pensée sans aveu,” 25.

of the French insurance industry. Entering this particular branch of the French corporate world was not an innocuous choice. By the late 1990s, the inability of successive governments to resolve the chronic unemployment that had plagued France since the seventies sparked a critique of the French welfare state, which many accused of exacerbating the country's economic decline. In this effort, the FFSA assumed a leading role. Specifically, the insurers' organization played a critical role in the decision by the MEDEF (the *Mouvement des entreprises de France*), France's employers' organization, to withdraw unilaterally in early 2000 from the social welfare funds which, in France's system, are co-administered by business and labor unions, in order to force a systematic renegotiation of the terms of the French social contract. Baptized "*la refondation sociale*" (or "social restructuring"), this initiative amounted to an attempt by France's corporate elites to reform the French welfare provisions by circumventing the state, which, from their perspective, had proven itself an unreliable partner. In this endeavor—which, in asserting the superiority of business' capacity to manage the economy over that of the state, echoes the themes of Foucault's 1979 lectures—the philosopher's onetime disciple served as the organic intellectual to France's corporate elite. In 1979, Foucault had suggested that a fitting motto for neoliberalism might be: "Live dangerously!" In similar terms, Ewald, in 2000, denounced the "strange contemporary reversal which, at least in France, makes us privilege protection, security, and conservation"—benefits that are traditionally believed to come from the state. To reject these habits, we need not, as Jean Baudrillard would have it, to forget Foucault, but precisely to remember him: for Foucault, Ewald argued, "risk is less an evil than a 'good' in the economic sense; it is 'useful,' progressive, the very nourishment of the rationality of individual and collective choices" which one must learn "to optimize."<sup>19</sup> Risk, Ewald and Kessler contend, should not be feared, but recognized as what Foucault called "our *episteme*": the "human adventure" is henceforth placed "under the sign of the risk."<sup>20</sup>

The point is not that Ewald should be thought of as representing the "legitimate" Foucauldian position on neoliberalism. Nor would it be true to say that Foucault's thought necessarily leads to Ewald and the MEDEF. But Ewald's unusual career is eloquent testimony to the very specific historical circumstances that shaped Foucault's political thought in the late

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<sup>19</sup> Ewald and Kessler, "Les noces du risque et de la politique," 60.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.



seventies. The critique of Marxism, suspicion towards mainstream socialism, wariness towards the state, and, in general, a desire for a politics of freedom unshackled from the constraints of leftist ideologies were central to how Foucault and his followers came to think about politics in these years. These concerns led them to look at neoliberalism. And they liked what they saw.

## Conclusion

It is always tempting to search the works of great philosophers for truths that transcend their historical moment—especially when, at some point in the past, they pronounced on topics that appear to speak directly to present concerns. Michel Foucault, of course, was firmly convinced that thought is always rigorously limited by the particular historical horizon in which it germinates. This essay has argued, in effect, that this insight should be applied to Foucault’s own analysis of neoliberalism. Though Foucault’s 1979 lectures coincide chronologically with what some historians consider the beginning of neoliberalism, it would be a mistake to view *The Birth of Biopolitics* as a quick philosophical sketch drafted by a thinker who was present at the creation. Rather, the lectures were shaped by the ideological fluidity that characterized French intellectual politics in the seventies, as well as by Foucault’s own philosophical agenda. They also made it possible for François Ewald to participate in the frankly neoliberal politics of France’s corporate elite, even while proclaiming fidelity to his erstwhile mentor. The specific circumstances that brought Foucault to neoliberalism, and the fact that he tentatively endorsed it in order to settle a number of political and philosophical scores, should give pause to those who would enlist Foucault in their struggles against the new international order.

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# BEYOND STATE POLITICS: SUBJECTIVITIES AND TECHNIQUES OF GOVERNMENT IN CONTEMPORARY NEOLIBERAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

CATHERINE WILSON

## **Introduction**

Neo-liberal democracies produce a particular type of human subject, one that is constituted with a will to act, and the political and economic participation of these subjects are necessary for the production of these societies. As Cruikshank (1999) argues, “the subjectivity of the citizen is the object and the outcome of government” (40). The production of subjectivity therefore, is an important part of the process by which social movements proliferate in neo-liberal democracies. Effective government produces subjects who will participate in social movements and social movements that will shape subjectivities. Social movements are, in Cruikshank’s terminology, “technologies of citizenship: discourses, programs, and other tactics aimed at making individuals politically active and capable of self-government” (1). They govern both participants and targets even as they produce them as subjects. Yet sociological scholars of social movements have, for the most part, persisted in constructing social movements as mass actions designed to liberate constituents from repressive power. This is contrary to Foucault’s insistence that power, rather than repressing human freedom, produces subjectivity, so that human freedom, like other capacities, is produced by power.

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasures, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression (1984: 61).

For Foucault then, the subject is constituted by relations of power, and engages in strategic relations of power, utilizing techniques of government. This is substantially different from theories in which the subject is compliant; Foucault's subject is complicit. Power is produced in every relation, at every point of a complex web. The subject whose strategy fails at one point, succeeds at another. These strategic relations are not the domain of the state or the dominant group, but rather occur at every level and at every position. They include dominance, alliance, and also resistance, not as a force opposing power, but as a corollary of its constitution. Major dominations, including the state, are the effects of these strategies of power at a micro level.

The resources of the state's governmental apparatus are unrivalled, however social movements, like other groups, and individuals when acting upon themselves, necessarily also engage in governance. Indeed the governmental double imperative: to increasingly expand governance throughout the social fabric, reaching into the minutia of daily life; and to restrain the state from direct intervention whenever possible, requires non-state authorities to increasingly implement and improvise governmental techniques.

There are multiple evident problems with the conception of social movements as liberating agents from repressive power, but it has proven particularly limited when applied to New Social Movements, the contemporary social movements that have proliferated in neo-liberal democracies since the 1960s. My argument is that Foucault's theory of power has been underutilized in the sociological study of social movements, and that it is particularly useful for understanding New Social Movements and for addressing the limitations of the existing New Social Movement paradigm.

### **The NSM Paradigm**

New Social Movements (NSMs) refers to the contemporary social movements that have proliferated in neo-liberal democracies since the 1960s. These social movements have "presumably displaced the old social movement of proletarian revolution associated with classical Marxism" (Buechler, 1995: 442). As a result, there is considerable debate as to whether or not these movements ought to be considered 'new' (Cohen, 1985; Offe, 1985; Klandermans, Kriesi, and Tarrow, 1988; Tarrow, 1989; Melucci, 1994).

The theorizing that characterizes these movements as “new” emerged from traditions of continental European social theory and political philosophy (Cohen, 1985; Klandermans, 1991; Klandermans and Tarrow, 1988; Larana, Johnston, and Gusfield, 1994) in an effort to redress classical Marxism’s failure to adequately analyze contemporary forms of collective action. Buechler (1995) argues that

different theorists operate with different models (referring variously to postindustrial society, an informational society, advanced capitalism, etc.), but the attempt to theorize a historically specific social formation as the structural backdrop for contemporary forms of collective action is perhaps the most distinctive feature of new social movement theories (442-43).

To utilize NSM theory, it is not necessary to argue that NSMs are never before seen phenomena, nor is it necessary to argue that traditional Marxist movements no longer exist. Castells (1977; 1978; 1983) for instance, sees class-based and new social movements as co-existing, dialectical collective actions that are expressed in both state and cultural arenas. Nonetheless, in the specific context of post-industrial, neo-liberal democracies, NSMs are uniquely prominent and prolific. To ignore them then, or to reduce them to the logic of capitalist production or to class relationships and social identities, misses an important opportunity, not only to understand collective action, but also to understand its relationship to the political and economic contexts in which movements emerge.

The designation of New Social Movement attempts to aggregate a set of contemporary neo-liberal social movements, which share particular characteristics. Johnston, Laraña, and Gusfield (1994) delineate what they consider the fundamental characteristics of an NSM, characteristics that they assert contrast with those of working-class movements that proliferated in the past. First, the structural roles of participants are not clearly linked to the movement. Second, NSMs do not exhibit overarching ideological characteristics in the Marxist sense, but rather demonstrate a pluralism of values and ideas. Third, NSMs tend to mobilize around new or formerly weak identities, rather than economic grievances. Fourth, much of what is considered movement activity takes place in the lived experience of individual constituents, thus blurring the line between the individual participant and the collective. Fifth, these movements often address what was formerly considered “private” areas of life. Sixth, NSM tactics often embrace dramatic civil disobedience and nonviolence. Seventh, NSM proliferation is related to a decreasing faith in institutionalized

political participation. Finally, these movements tend to be decentralized and diffuse.

At the macro level, the NSM paradigm emphasizes the role of culture in social movements. On a micro level, it is concerned with issues of identity and the politicization of personal behavior. It is a structural theory in that it links NSM activity to a shift from industrial to post-industrial economies. Some examples of NSMs that fit well into this paradigm include anti-nuclear movements, contingents of the GLBT movement, peace movements, sectors of the women's movement, and the animal rights movement.

NSMs are contrasted to the proletarian movements of the past, in which participants are characterized as having been linked by class interests and mobilizing to pursue a Marxist agenda, either to transform the mode of production or to improve their material experience within the existing mode. In the NSM paradigm, deindustrialization erodes the collectivism that produced traditional, class-based social movements and increases the salience of other identities.

The NSM paradigm suffers from three primary limitations. First, critics argue that NSM type movements existed in periods prior to post-industrialism and that traditional movements still arise within these societies (D'Anieri, 1990; Calhoun, 1993; Pichardo, 1997). Second, the NSM paradigm may only adequately explain leftist movements, but fails to sufficiently account for those on the right (Pichardo, 1997). Third, the NSM paradigm asserts a structural link between NSM proliferation and postindustrial economies, but it fails to identify the mechanism by which these economies produce NSMs.

Each of these problems can be addressed by considering NSMs from a perspective informed by Foucault's analysis of power. Further, if we set aside the issue as to whether these movements are literally new, and accept rather a less ambitious premise—that there are now more social movements that fit the New Social Movement characterization—we can then accept a *distinction* between new social movements that prioritize cultural and identity based concerns, and traditional social movements that mobilize around class interests. We are left with questions as to why, and by what mechanism NSMs proliferate in a post-industrial economy. Foucault's conception of power as a triad of sovereign, disciplinary, and governmental rationalities that target and produce populations and

subjectivities can resolve these limitations of the NSM paradigm and provide an explanation for the increasing prevalence of NSMs in neoliberal democracies.

### **Foucault's Triangle**

Foucault argues of power that “in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government, which has as its primary target the population and as its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security” (1991: 102). He identifies a transition from a society dominated by sovereign rule to a more disciplinary society characterized by the development of anatomico-political techniques that shape the individual body. Similarly, the development of bio-political techniques aimed at the social, or collective body are characteristic of governmental society.

The purpose of sovereign power is always to exercise sovereign power. The sovereign exercises power through force, so that he may continue to exercise power through force. For instance, sovereign power exercises power through punishment that takes the form of a ritual, intended to sanctify and express the law, rather than reform the criminal.

In contrast, disciplinary power places agents under a system of surveillance so pervasive that they interiorize the disciplinary gaze as part of their subjectivities and ultimately oversee their own conduct through self-discipline. Rather than an awesome ritual ceremony, disciplinary power focuses on the smallest details of human life. The ritual of discipline “was not the triumph, but the review, the ‘parade,’ an ostentatious form of the examination. In it the ‘subjects’ were presented as ‘objects’ to the observation of a power that was manifested only by its gaze” (Foucault, 1977: 9). This minute focus allows disciplinary power to affect subjects more efficiently, through the management of everyday life, and thereby maximizes profit.

Governmentality reinscribes the anatomico-political rationalities of both sovereign and disciplinary power into a bio-political rationality, implementing their techniques at the level of the social body.

The object of sovereign power is the exercise of authority over the subjects of the state within a definite territory, e.g. the “deductive” practices of levying of taxes, of meting out punishments. The object of disciplinary power is the regulation and ordering of the numbers of people within that territory, e.g. in practices of schooling, military training or the

organization of work. The new object of government, by contrast, regards these subjects, and the forces and capacities of living individuals, as members of a population, as resources to be fostered, to be used and to be optimized. (Dean, 1999: 20)

Anatomo-political and bio-political techniques parallel one another to engage with population. Foucault asserts that population is the essential object of government. Population, Curtis (2001) argues, depends firstly on the establishment of a system of practical equivalences, the idea that individuals share an abstract and essential commonality. Foucault traces the emergence of population to medical observation, record keeping, and investigations by doctors who became aware of disease populations (1973). The disease created the system of practical equivalences among patients and, Curtis notes, “Normalizing judgment implied authoritative categorization and hence the construction of populations” (Curtis, 2002: 511).

Population is thereby constituted based on specialist insertion of individual “cases” into epistemological space. Resultantly, the individual subject is a “case” in many populations, resulting in multiple, potentially conflicting identities and “interests,” but is ultimately located at the single point at which those populations, in the individual, intersect. Curtis posits that this “allows us to think the shifting coalitions that constitute the new social movements and the struggles of the governed” (2002: 506). In other words, this allows us to think identity politics, which are forefront in New Social Movements, and which are political because when power is exercised through techniques of government, which are deployed to manage populations, resisters may challenge *either* the constitution of the population, through identity, *or* the techniques that target it. Ironically however, any organized resistance in governmental society depends upon self-constitution as a population.

The constitution of population is vitally important because the equation by which the sovereignty-discipline-government triangle is proportioned depends upon the population targeted, and populations are constituted differently on the basis of historical moment, economic structure, and location in a web of relations of power. In the same way that populations are differentially constituted along these lines, so are individuals, as the techniques of government produce them both.



## Subjectivation

Foucault identifies two forms of moral subjectivation and practices of self (1985). In the first, a quasi-judicial mode, the ethical subject refers his conduct to law, or risks punishment. In the second, a self-relational mode, the ethical subject emphasizes forms of relations with the self, or practices of the self.

Foucault argues that both quasi-judicial and self-relational modes operate in the constitution of modern subjectivities, but that the self-relational mode increasingly dominates. This is because it has been fostered by neo-liberal techniques of governmentality to constitute subjects who *will* to self-govern, thus reducing the necessity of displays of state force and increasing state legitimacy within democratic discursive programs. The dominance of the self-relational mode of subjectivation is linked to the dominance of government in the composition of sovereignty-discipline-government. In a neo-liberal society the state, and economic and other agents provide discursive programs and governmental techniques that foster self-relational subjectivation.

Foucault demonstrates that a whole series of techniques and knowledges produce and are produced by power. He saw the state as using bio-power, the production and management of individual and social bodies, to exercise control over populations. By using disciplinary techniques to produce knowledge about individuals, categorizing them, and enumerating them, the state can effect governmental strategies for creating populations of autonomous individuals that will also produce the state (Foucault, 1982: 220-221). Foucault insists that the neo-liberal state, because it does not want to display force, relies upon citizens who can autonomously control themselves. The transition from the dominance of sovereign power to government entailed a shift of sovereignty from the state to the individual, in accordance with democratization. Whereas before the sovereign state predominately governed the individual, the sovereign individual could increasingly govern herself. But the state still aims to dominate subjects, while maximizing their health, welfare and productivity. Techniques of government operate through both discipline and desire to produce autonomous individuals who will engage in force relations that generally re/produce the status quo in relations of power and maintain the domination of the state, while increasing its economy of governance.

Because individuals and populations are differently located with regard to relations of force, they are subject to different compositions of sovereignty-discipline-government. As a result, they are differently constituted as populations and as subjects. Different techniques target these different populations based on their human capital, as assessed by neo-liberal rationality, and a single discursive program may include multiple governmental techniques that target the different populations as established by the discourse. This is a matter of population utility. Populations that produce subjects that privilege the quasi-judicial mode of subjectivation are inserted into technologies of surveillance and discipline, while populations that are constituted as having more human capital, and that privilege the self-relational mode of subjectivation, are more likely to be inserted into governmental technologies because their knowledge of themselves is legitimized, both in the sense that they can be expected to act upon themselves and also be trusted to seek expert guidance as necessary.

These interventions are not entirely distinct and may often overlap, and in doing so, while they re-constitute the populations and subjectivities that they target through different compositions of sovereignty-discipline-government, they also create space for strategy. Thus different subject locations privilege the two modes of subjectivation to differing extents depending upon their production by sovereignty-discipline-government.

The development of a program of child welfare provides an illustrative case. Concern for child welfare and contemporary interventions into the family, particularly with regard to mothering, began in the nineteenth century, organized by bourgeois women to shape the mothering techniques of working class and immigrant women in service to military, industrial, and moral ends (Rose, 1999). Rose (1999) documents that this movement to “reform” the working class family found an ally in medicine, which normalized the bourgeois family, and produced images by which individuals could evaluate their own families. “Philanthropists and hygienists campaigned to have their strategies enshrined in law and their expertise linked to the activities of social institutions such as courts, hospitals, prisons, and schools” (130). Their success resulted in what, by the beginning of the twentieth century, was an assemblage of technologies of discipline and government regulating the family without compromising its autonomy. “Parental conduct, motherhood, and child rearing can thus be regulated through family autonomy, through wishes and aspirations,

and through the activation of individual guilt, personal anxiety, and private disappointment” (132).

Contemporary programs of child welfare subject mothering to surveillance by both individual and institutional agents. Yet the techniques by which interventions are made differ by population. If a mother is poor, she is more likely to be instructed, through parenting classes or case management intervention, in proper childcare and subjected to intrusive surveillance of her mothering by the state. She is more likely to face the threat or reality of losing her children (Schene, 1998). The utility of poor populations is related to their capacities for reliability, following directions, and submission to authorities. The techniques of government and/or discipline to which a poor mother is subjected therefore must foster these capacities in her, and facilitate her fostering of these capacities in her children. In contrast, if she is a bourgeois mother, she will likely be encouraged by any number of non-state agents, including friends, family, medical professionals, or colleagues, to seek therapy or self-help, or may motivate herself to do so. For instance, Taylor’s (1996) study of women’s self-help groups for postpartum depression evidences the ways in which middle-class women, who privilege the self-relational mode of subjectivation, subject themselves to the governmental technique of self help to shape their subjectivities as mothers. Thus, with expert guidance, she will work on herself and her relationship with her child. This is because the utility of bourgeois populations is in their capacities for self-direction, creativity and innovation, decision-making and management, etc. The techniques of government to which a bourgeois mother is subjected therefore, must foster these capacities.

### **NSMs Reconsidered**

Foucault’s conception of power enriches social movement scholarship in that it offers us a *mechanism* by which the shift to post-industrial economies incites an increase in New Social Movements. As economies have become post-industrial, neo-liberal rationality has increasingly permeated social life. In neo-liberal democracies, the composition of sovereignty-discipline-government shifts, from an industrial economy dominated by disciplinary techniques to a post-industrial, neo-liberal society dominated by techniques of government.

These techniques target and constitute multiple overlapping populations, *but to the extent that a population is constituted by government* it produces

subjectivities that privilege a self-relational mode of subjectivation. Conversely, a population constituted predominately by disciplinary techniques will produce subjectivities that privilege the quasi-juridical mode of subjectivation. As economies shift to post-industrial neo-liberalism, populations are increasingly governed and thereby produce more self-relational subjectivities.

These subjectivities constituted by governmental rationality are more likely to participate in NSMs. In the case of Taylor's (1996) study of self-help groups for postpartum depression, she argues that the organization of these groups is a New Social Movement, in that their "three main strategies—consciousness-raising, direct service, and lobbying—have come directly out of the women's health movement of the 1970s and are deployed not only to provide emotional support to participants but also to work for long-term institutional changes in the medical and mental health systems, the law, family policy, and the society at large" (6). As in many studies of NSMs, Taylor found participants to be overwhelmingly white and middle class. In this case, women who privilege the self-relational mode of subjectivation produce concomitantly a technology of governance allied with expertise to shape their subjectivities as mothers and a New Social Movement focused on "disputed meanings—in this case the debate over whether postpartum illness should be treated as a bona fide medical condition—and contested identities, namely the changing meaning of motherhood" (6).

The NSM emphasis on identity is quintessentially self-relational, and the emphasis on the production of movement cultures requires self-objectification as the intimate details of daily life are politicized and the distinction between the individual and the collective is blurred. In the animal rights movement for example, this requires self-discipline in daily life, and self-work so as to regulate eating habits, in the instance of vegetarianism and veganism, or to make consumer choices around personal hygiene and clothing that are "animal friendly," and that also serve to distinguish activist culture. Activists develop a collective identity as animal rights activists, with an array of variations by which to differentiate themselves from one another. "The identity of an animal rights activist may be as a radical vegan, an animal rescuer, a conservationist or as someone who goes on marches or writes letters to the editor" (Munro, 2005: 83). When demonstrations and other forms of direct collective action are tactics equal to individualized actions around food

choices, the distinction between the subjectivity of the activist and the collectivity of the movement erodes.

On the other hand, quasi-judicial subjectivities constituted by disciplinary rationality are more likely to participate in traditional social movements that target juridical change through legitimate democratic channels. When the ethical subject refers her conduct to law, efforts to change conduct will focus on juridical change. This is why the shift, in Western Europe and North America, to post-industrial economies and neo-liberal economic rationality results in a proliferation of New Social Movements and a concomitant decline in traditional movements.

Yet critics of the NSM paradigm are correct to argue that similar movements have existed prior to neo-liberalism and that traditional movements continue to exist in neo-liberal societies. This is because populations are differentially constituted, not only among societies, but *within a society*. Different populations, structured by their human capital, are constituted and targeted by different compositions of sovereignty-discipline-government. So while all populations in these societies will produce *increasingly* self-relational subjects, some populations are still likely to privilege quasi-judicial subjectivation and participate in traditional movements that appeal to the juridical. This differentiation can be clearly seen in the distinction between the environmental movement and the environmental justice movement. Environmentalists are disproportionately white, middle-class activists who seek to protect the environment from pollution or degradation through a variety of institutional and non-institutional, including both highly personalized and occasionally extreme means. Environmental justice activists are typically racially diverse, working-class activists who seek, through accepted democratic institutions, to protect people from the disproportionate environmental degradation visited upon poor and working class neighborhoods. While both of these are examples of progressive movements, it is generally not surprising that the NSM paradigm explains movements of the left better than those of the right. Rightist movements tend to mobilize populations that have been left behind by post-industrialism. As such, they are constituted by an equation of power in which government is less dominant and are more likely than leftist movements to privilege a quasi-judicial mode of subjectivation that does not foster New Social Movement activity.

## **NSM Government**

Neo-liberal democratic government then, produces subjects who are likely to engage in New Social Movements, thus fostering the proliferation of these movements as societies shift from industrial, to post-industrial, neo-liberal democracies. Also important however, is that NSMs, produced by government, also employ governmental techniques.

Clearly, all social movements seek to shape human conduct. Yet NSMs, more than other types of movements, utilize desire and self-knowledge as techniques to shape human behavior, hence their focus on identity, the politicization of formerly private areas of life, and the production of movement-specific culture, which is often linked to distinguishing consumption.

Paradoxically, while individual subjectivities have been increasingly governmentalized, the techniques of governance are increasingly democratized. Social movement groups employ governmental techniques much as the state does, but with different leverage and different effects. Force relations permeate the social fabric, but the techniques of governance that are deployed toward dominated populations are not necessarily those that govern dominant populations. Foucault argues that every force relation provides an opportunity for intervention into the exercise of power, and governmental techniques are thus employed by both state and non-state subjects, by both the dominant and the dominated, in multiple relations and constellations. Sometimes, state government produces social movement actions to modify state government in favor of techniques more suited to the interests of the social movement group. In other words, the techniques of government employed by the liberal democratic state have the potential to produce subjects who may attempt to govern the conduct of state actors. To do so, social movement groups may articulate knowledges commonly deployed for purposes of state government, either against the state, or in attempts to align with state actors to govern populations according to movement interests.

Non-state governance occurs in three primary ways. First, liberal democratic subjects increasingly govern themselves by a wide array of technologies of self, as exemplified previously with regard to postpartum depression support groups, in which technologies of self operate to encourage women to interrogate themselves, work on themselves, constitute themselves as ethical subjects who require self-management,

and to engage in that management. At the same time they are participants in an NSM that aims to reconstruct the meaning of motherhood and effect changes in medical responses to postpartum depression.

Second, subjects may organize for social change and, when not engaging in violent conflict, employ governmental techniques toward that end. For instance, animal rights activists organize humane education classes for children and adults, where animals are anthropomorphized, so as to activate the identities of participants, and where “animal friendly” lifestyles are articulated with medical discourses to argue for instance, that vegetarianism is healthier, and to encourage self-work in these areas.

Finally, in a time of increasing privatization and out-sourcing, non-state agencies and authorities are commonly legitimized for implementing the techniques of state government through various programs, surveillance and discipline. This provides opportunities for such authorities to articulate their own concerns within those strategies. Social movement groups are likely to seek reforms that institute themselves as non-state agents of techniques of government. In the case of animal rights, activists have pursued legislation prohibiting various forms of animal harm, and in many jurisdictions have achieved the right to formally or informally investigate and enforce those laws.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the application of Foucault’s analysis of power demonstrates that because the sovereignty-discipline-government triangle operates in different combinations at different historical moments, upon different populations, and in different societies, as neo-liberal governmentality has become dominant in contemporary democracies, it has fostered the dominance of the self-relational mode of subjectivation. Much as governmental techniques reach in to the minutia of daily life, so too do New Social Movements, and so this composition of power fosters their emergence. Nonetheless, NSMs often seek to institutionalize themselves in ways that legitimize them as agents of government. This is because *increasingly*, with neo-liberal governmentality, the minutia of self and daily life that concern New Social Movements are the sites at which power is exercised through subjectivities, and therefore the terrain of both potential dominance and resistance.

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## **SECTION II:**

### **SUBJECTION, SUBJECTIVATION AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SELF**

# ARTS OF LIFE, ARTS OF RESISTANCE: FOUCAULT AND HADOT ON LIVING PHILOSOPHY

EDWARD MCGUSHIN

We need to free ourselves of the sacralization of the social as the only instance of the real and stop regarding that essential element in human life and human relations—I mean thought—as so much wind. Thought does exist both beyond and before systems and edifices of discourse. It is something that is hidden but always drives everyday behaviors. There is a little thought occurring even in the most stupid institutions; there is always thought even in silent habits. (Foucault, 2000b: p.456)

This paper is about the practice of philosophy as a *counter*-conduct, as a way of living and thinking that runs *counter* to the main lines and networks of power that run through our institutions and "silent habits." Michel Foucault helped us re-imagine the power of thinking and the function, the effects, of thought on life. In his final work on "care of the self" this becomes most evident. To demonstrate what I mean I will argue we must recognize that Foucault's work has two moments: a diagnostic and an etho-poetic moment. Diagnosis puts forward a series of descriptive analyses and definitions of who we are, what our condition is. Etho-poesis is the art of re-making (*poiesis*) our way of living, of changing who we are (our *ethos*). By claiming that there are two moments to Foucault's work I do not mean that these two functions of discourse succeed one another in time, or represent different phases in the development or articulation of his thought: they are not two separate activities or strategies. Rather I mean that we can read Foucault's major books with an eye either to their diagnostic function—that is, in terms of what they teach us about discourse, power, institutions, etc; or we can read them with an attention to the effects they have on us as readers and to the effects they had on Foucault as a writer and thinker. In other words, diagnosis *is* an etho-poetic activity. My claim is that many readings of Foucault fail to recognize that his diagnosis of the present—who we are today—is not really a theory of society or of social critique. It is rather an *askésis*, a *spiritual exercise*, an effort to

transform himself. The notion that philosophy is spiritual exercise comes to Foucault through French philosopher, Pierre Hadot. This paper will proceed according to the following plan: first I will outline some conclusions that we may draw about our present condition from Foucault's diagnosis of power and knowledge. Second I will explain what care of the self and spiritual exercises are in Hadot and Foucault. Third, the bulk of the paper will provide a sort of catalogue of spiritual exercises in the work of Foucault that might provide resources for thinking as a counter-conduct. This does not mean Foucault tells us what to do or how to live. Rather, he provides an example, a model, as well as some tools, techniques, modes of thinking that we might adopt in our own effort to get free of who we have become.

To begin, let's briefly review some of the conclusions one might draw about contemporary life from Foucault's diagnosis. By now we are familiar with Foucault's analysis of our present condition. In the final part of *The History of Sexuality Volume One* Foucault outlines a general shift in the technology of political power that distinguishes the modern era from earlier times: "One might say that the ancient right to take life or let live was replaced by a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death." (Foucault, 1990a: 138) In that text Foucault famously claims that:

starting in the seventeenth century, this power over life evolved in two basic forms; [...] One of these poles [...] centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the exertion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the *disciplines*: an *anatomo-politics of the human body*. The second, [...] focused on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls*: a *biopolitics of the population*. (Foucault, 1990a: 139)

Between these two poles—the individual body and the population as a whole—there are a whole range of institutions, relationships, discourses, and technologies. Contemporary forms of power provide us with technologies of living that aim at the maximization of life's biological and economic potential—arts of mental and psychological health, technologies of efficiency and economy. In so doing they focus and train out attention. They come to be seen as the very definition of the 'rational'. It simply

makes sense that one should make living, life itself, one's principle aim in life. Disciplines and bio-politics train us to perform utilitarian calculations of cost and benefit, means-to-ends; they offer experts steeped in the arts of surfacing and interpreting our truest desires so that we can take up the project of satisfying them in our lives and relationships. Contemporary power inculcates in us a relation to ourselves, a mode of subjectivity in which I grasp myself in terms of my economic and biological potential, in which I evaluate and worry about the normalcy of my physical and mental states, in which I always try to interpret what my true desires and interests are in order to liberate them and pursue them in the most effective way. Contemporary forms of power function in order to discipline and train minds and bodies, to contain and control the abnormal in our thoughts and to contain and control abnormal individuals; normalization thus institutes a permanent and pervasive anxiety about the dangers of *abnormality*, about the dangers of biological disorders present within me or present in the population around me. It deploys institutions such as prisons, hospitals, schools, police forces, government agencies, insurance companies, corporate capitalism that all offer me assistance, security, insurance while heightening my sense of risk and danger, and while identifying, confining, treating or excluding individuals and groups who present threats—biological and economic threats—calculated to be too costly to ignore. Modern power always watches and examines; it is panoptic—security cameras and wire-tapping, spyware, and continuous assessment bathe us in light. Exposure to pervasive examination leads to internalization of surveillance, to self-surveillance and constant self-examination in order that I continue to be normal and to develop and realize my potential. The power over living aims at hygiene and health, normalcy and productivity, rational calculations of costs and benefits, ends and means. This power brings to my attention the risks, the dangers, deep within me and all around me in the things I consume, the pollution I create, the other people around me, in sunlight and air, in microscopic life forms penetrating my body. It makes me anxious to think normal thoughts, feel normal feelings, to develop my potentials at a normal pace, follow the normal path through life without regressing or falling behind. Control is attained not through repressing me, saying no to me, stunting my growth, or forbidding my happiness, but rather through producing my life in these ways and through producing in me this relation to myself, this mode of subjectivity. This normalized desire for biological health, discipline, economic well-being, all in all, the desire for individual happiness and for the interest of the population underwrites the gravest cruelty, from torture, to smart-bombs, to sweat-shop labor. Finally, the disciplines, normalization, the

hermeneutics of desire, bio-political regulation of life, all of these techniques, relations and practices tend towards their own intensification and extension—they are never fixed and complete but always mobile and fragile, open to reversal, they are always strategies for greater control (Foucault, 2000: 346-347). Disciplinary problems, for example—which arise all the time—do not generally lead to the rejection of discipline or even a critical reflection on it as mode of control, but rather to the plea for more of it. Subjects trained in discipline come to demand discipline.

Faced with this diagnosis many readers wonder what we are supposed to do. Foucault never makes a theoretical case as to what precisely is wrong with this picture, why we should resist it, how we can resist it. In fact, it seems to some that Foucault has created an "iron-cage" of power that undermines our efforts of liberation at every turn. Others believe that Foucault encourages us to seek out purely irrational "limit experiences" as the only way out of power relations. I believe that such conclusions are based on a fundamental misreading of Foucault's work. Foucault is not primarily a critical theorist who sets out to demonstrate what is wrong with society and how it can be improved by appealing to a normative theory. He is, rather, engaged in the practice of philosophy, a practice which defines his writing and his research but also his life, his activism, his very mode of being a subject. This becomes clear in Foucault's final work on "care of the self."

Foucault's final lecture courses and books dealt with ancient Greco-Roman practices of philosophy defined as the care of the self (*epimeleia heautou*) and as the arts of existence (*techné tou biou*). In other words, life, living, life as the object of fashioning and work, the self as a living being in relation to itself—these notions are central to Foucault's excavation of ancient Greek philosophy. Many of his readers have pointed out that Foucault frequently characterized his own work as a form of care of the self, an askesis or spiritual exercise. The most famous of these self-characterizations comes in the opening pages of *The Use of Pleasure*:

As for what motivated me... it was curiosity ... not the curiosity that seeks to assimilate what it is proper for one to know, but that which enables one to get free of oneself. After all, what would be the value of the passion for knowledge if it resulted only in a certain amount of knowledgeablebleness and not, in one way or another and to the extent possible, in the knower's straying afield of himself? [...] The essay, which should be understood as the assay or test by which, in the game of truth, one undergoes changes, and not as the simplistic appropriation of others for the purpose of communication—is the living substance of philosophy, at least if we

assume that philosophy is still what it was in times past, i.e., an 'ascesis', askesis, an exercise of oneself in the activity of thought. (Foucault, 1990b: 8-9)

In this passage Foucault invites us to participate in a practice of philosophical askésis—to engage in an exercise of ourselves in the activity of thought. Many of Foucault's readers have argued that Foucault's books are part of his own effort to free himself, through askésis, from that form of life and subjectivity inscribed in us through discipline and bio-power. This work on himself is then a counter-conduct, a practice of thought, a relationship to one's life, that runs counter to the conduct, the governmentality, that pervades and invests our bodies, thoughts, spaces and time.<sup>1</sup> What's more, Foucault shared this work with his readers and students so that reading these works can be part of our practice of care of the self – these books can serve the same ends for us as they did for the writer.<sup>2</sup> Foucault however does not give us the answers we might want about who we really are and how we really should live our lives.<sup>3</sup> Foucault's work, as Todd May has recently put it, leads us to ask, "each of us alone and many of us together, how we might create lives worth living, how we might understand what we have become in order to wrestle with its intolerable aspects and to embrace what we might make of it." (May, 2006: 183-184) While we might expect a spiritual director to point the way to us, to answer our questions, in fact, many of the philosophical exemplars of spiritual direction that Foucault examines refuse to do precisely this. They put their words and their lives forward as examples—sometimes they provide answers, but mostly they turn our lives into questions posed to us.

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<sup>1</sup> On the notion of "governmentality" see, Foucault, 2007: 87-134; on the notion of conduct and counter-conduct see Foucault 2007: 191-226.

<sup>2</sup> For May, the "primary value and perhaps, in the end, the only point of returning to these books once we have finished them for the first time, would be to use them as spiritual exercises for ourselves, to allow us to recognize, yet again each time, deep assumptions about who we must be that are not only expendable but in fact destructive. [...] We need to re-read them, if indeed we do have that need, to be reminded, always again, always because we forget that our psychological personalities are not written in stone, that our sexual desires are not the keys to our emotional lives, and that, most importantly, who we have come to be is not who we must be. These are lessons we cannot be reminded of enough; their denial is part of the common opinion that surrounds us, the ether in which we conduct our lives." (May, 2006: 180)

<sup>3</sup> For example, see May 2006: 183

It is absolutely true, then, that Foucault does not present us with any definition of the direction we ought to go from here. He does not tell us who we ought to be or how we ought to arrive at that true self. More often he tells us who we have been made into and how we came to be made that way. Nonetheless, I do think that reading Foucault, and Hadot, does lead one to a provisional sense of at least some of the elements that could go into a philosophical life.<sup>4</sup> We can schematically cover a few practices of the philosophical life that appear in the work of Hadot and Foucault. I do not intend here to cover over the differences between the two—it may be that certain elements of their respective philosophical practices, methods, aims and attitudes are irreconcilable. That is not a problem for my purposes in this sketch. The present essay is concerned only with the potential that each has for forming counter-conducts and counter-subjectivities in resistance to discipline, normalization, bio-politics, the hermeneutics of desire.<sup>5</sup> Further, I think it is perfectly justifiable to approach their work in this way because they both stressed the eclecticism of ancient philosophical askēsis: philosophers drew from many sources and developed numerous techniques and strategies for their practice. First I will briefly summarize the framework of "care of the self". In this I will refer to Foucault's later work as well as to the work of Pierre Hadot. Then I will provide a few examples from the work of Hadot and Foucault to show us some of the ways philosophy can function as a counter-conduct.

First, with respect to Foucault we can sketch some elements of his philosophical practice by organizing them according to the categories and distinctions that he articulated in his final lectures, and practiced throughout his life. First, care of the self. For Foucault this expression refers to the group of practices that ancient philosophers used to forge a relation to the self. For example, in care one becomes vigilant over oneself through the application of any number of techniques such as meditation, journal writing, repetition of principles and truths, dialogue with friends or spiritual directors; care can take the form of an administrative activity in which one records acts, choices, thoughts and feelings, adding up the balance sheet, reminding oneself to do better next time; it might also take on a juridical role, judging actions; or a hermeneutical role, interpreting

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<sup>4</sup> May concurs with this claim and points to Foucault's introduction to *Anti-Oedipus* as a make-shift list of guidelines for living philosophically (May 2000, 227).

<sup>5</sup> See note 1 above on counter-conduct, CdF78 – resistance is embedded in power, is parasitic on power, is specific, not universal: power is condition of possibility of resistance, possibility of resistance is the condition of actuality of power.



the hidden meaning of ideas or desires; it may involve analytical activities by which one examines, freezes, decomposes the 'flux' of mental representations in one's mind. These techniques – and there are many others – of relating to oneself can serve a variety of ends. For example, one might strive to master one's passions, or to attain and maintain an inner state of tranquility; or one might seek a sense of freedom from external temptation or fear. In each case, the relation to the self is an *activity* that brings about a certain attitude or mode of being—the relation to the self is not an immediate intuition, it is *not* (self-) knowledge—I do not relate to myself in the form of an on-looking subject regarding an object open to disinterested observation. Relation is active intervention, it is interested, it shapes the self that I relate to. Subjectivity for Foucault is this relation, or relating, to oneself—it is mobile, it is a practice or system of practices, it produces a certain type of self. To live philosophy then might involve inventing or experimenting in the domain of care of the self. Recalling the passage above from *The Use of Pleasure*, we seemingly could construe Foucault's care of the self as an activity of self-detachment, of straying a-field of himself. This means that he actively tries to free himself or distance himself from the self of discipline, normalization, desire, and bio-politics.<sup>6</sup> A practice of disengagement does not result in total destruction, the complete abandonment of the self of modern power. Rather, Foucault writes, it results in "a new vantage point and in a clearer light. Sure of having traveled far, one finds that one is looking down on oneself from above. The journey rejuvenates things, and ages the relationship with oneself." (Foucault, 1990b: 11) I am no longer the same self I was before because now the relation I have includes and relates to the self I was before—but evidently I am not completely other than the self I was before either.

A second category of philosophical practice is that of the arts of existence. Here Foucault refers to the reflective awareness and systematic practices that one takes up and lives out in order to give a determinate form to one's life. For example, what kind of actions will I perform, for what reasons, in what kinds of relationships—how do I live as a father, a husband, a friend, a citizen, as an embodied human being, etc? Each of these areas is a field of activities and relationships that can be deliberately shaped, that present opportunities for joy, success, as well as risks and occasions for failure, anxiety, shame. Once again Foucault, in his own philosophical practice, seeks out technologies of existing, arts of living counter to bio-political,

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<sup>6</sup> May also reads Foucault in this way: May, 2000; 2006.

disciplinary life. I will just indicate one example of a technology that Foucault develops to shape his existence: *diagnosis*.<sup>7</sup> Foucault orients his life as a philosopher and as citizen-activist to the diagnosis of contemporary life. In doing so he cultivates a determinate kind of attention to life, he engages in deliberate activities, such as the formation of the *Group d'information sur les prisons* (GIP). One thing that made his involvement in the GIP unique was that the purpose of the group was to listen to the voices of inmates, not to speak for them, but to make oneself the medium through which their voices could be heard—*this is not a typical role for an intellectual or an academic*. Diagnosis makes determinate use of the body and is particularly attentive to the movements, comportments, and semiotics of bodies. Philippe Artières provides an excellent analysis of the presence and role of Foucault's body in his philosophical activity. For example, he discusses the way Foucault develops a manner of using his body as an "instrument in order to measure the intolerable character of the present, an instrument for face-to-face confrontation, an instrument of investigation, an instrument of thought." (Artières, 2002: 29) Diagnosis for Foucault lives the body as a gauge, a semiotic system of power and resistance. It attends to the signs and symptoms of struggle that bodies present. The diagnostic art of being a body and of reading bodies runs counter to the bio-political art of embodiment. Foucault writes, "We believe [insofar as we are normalized and normalizing subjects] ... that the body obeys the exclusive laws of physiology, and that it escapes the influence of history, but this too is false. The body is molded by a great many distinct regimes; it is broken down by the rhythms of work, rest, and holidays; it constructs resistances." (Foucault, 1998a: 380) The technology of diagnosis—which I have only sketched—is only one art of living, of being a body. While I have grouped diagnosis under the category of the arts of living, it certainly can be a form of care of the self to the degree that it brings about a different relation to oneself. But it also clearly gives form to one's embodied existence; the diagnosis of the symptoms of power in and around one becomes an aspect of one's way of living.

I would like to mention, at least very briefly, the role of truth that Foucault excavates in ancient philosophical practice. Namely, the practice of "fearless speech," or *parrhêsia*, that was so central to Foucault's analysis of Socratic, Platonic, Hellenistic and Roman philosophical lives. Parrhêsia is a form of truth that is grounded in courage, in the correspondence between the way one lives and the words one speaks, and that gives voice

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<sup>7</sup> For example, see Foucault, 1996: 53

to a critical kind of truth that reminds everyone of who they truly are, showing them how far they have fallen away from the truth. Parrhésia is the antidote to self-oblivion, to self-neglect, to the way in which we become absorbed in the world of our everyday concerns, worries, and neglect our relationship to ourselves. I think for Foucault this again would be reflected clearly in his books—though this claim raises the question of whether it is possible to have a parrhésiastic writing. If so then perhaps these books articulate parrhesiastic truth—waking us up to the discourses and relations of power that make us who we are, but doing so in order to remind us that we can get free of the selves we have become.<sup>8</sup>

Foucault approaches the problem of truth in philosophical life from another angle. He argues that in ancient philosophy truth is understood in terms of 'spirituality' (Foucault, 2005: 14-30). Spirituality is defined as a specific relationship between the subject and the truth. In spirituality, first of all, the subject is not in its native or original state capable of seeing the Truth, that is, Reality, Being, as it really is. The mode of being as a subject obscures the truth. Therefore the subject must undergo a conversion by which it is transformed in its being qua subject. This conversion is brought about either through *eros*—through the transformation of a love that tears one away from oneself—or more generally through *askesis*, through exercise, work on oneself. Foucault describes this conversion as the price the subject must pay, in her own being, in order to gain access to truth/reality. (Foucault, 2005: 15) Finally, spiritual truth is not reducible to propositional truth; it is not a property of a statement or a judgment. Rather the truth one attains in spirituality is experienced as a fullness of being, as a reward for one's sacrifice and effort, as joy, as salvation. This conception of truth is a general theme that underlies and periodically surfaces during the series of courses Foucault gave in Paris from 1982-1984. I do think that spiritual truth is at work in Foucault's philosophical practice. It is perhaps most evident in his earlier literary studies where he attends to that experience or that dimension which he calls the outside, the limit experience, transgression. In any case, positing the model of spirituality represents the possibility of a serious counter-conduct to the modern, analytic and scientific model of truth as correspondence, as disinterested, as sterile.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For example, see Foucault, 2001

<sup>9</sup> One last philosophical practice that Foucault introduces, that would serve as form of resistance to modern power: problematization. It seems to me that problematization is an art, or a practice, or a relation to oneself that runs counter to power insofar as problematization would problematize the subjectivities and forms

I would like to add a few remarks about the practice of philosophical life as presented in the work of Pierre Hadot. As with my brief expose of Foucault's spiritual exercises, this survey is meant neither to be complete nor to be taken as a set of prescriptions for the true or correct philosophical life. Rather, Hadot provides another model and other tools. Further, he helps outline the general framework that would make sense of the attempt to live philosophically, to practice philosophy as a way of being. First Hadot attempts to *recover* the ancient arts of living, the ancient spiritual exercises and demonstrate that these exercises are still practiced and relevant today even if they are not recognized as such by their modern practitioners.<sup>10</sup> Hadot holds that, "modern man can practice the spiritual exercises of antiquity, at the same time separating them from the philosophical or mythic discourse which came along with them. [...] In this way, we can accede concretely to the universality of the cosmic perspective, and the wonderful mystery of the presence of the universe."<sup>11</sup>

In an essay entitled, "The Sage and The World," Hadot showed that this cosmic perspective and sense of wonder were alive and well in contemporary practices such as post-impressionist painting and the method of phenomenology. (Hadot, 1995b) He argues that artists and some philosophers attempt to practice a form of thinking and perceiving that breaks free from the constraints and demands of everyday life—which distort our perception of the world, ourselves and others—in order to grasp and perceive things in their startling and beautiful reality. For example, Hadot quotes Bergson: "Life requires that we put on blinkers; we must not look to the right, to the left, or behind, but straight ahead, in the direction in which we are supposed to walk. In order to live, we must be selective in our knowledge and our memories, and retain only that which may contribute to our action upon things."<sup>12</sup> In everyday life our perception is pragmatic, it sees things insofar as they are useful; perception is geared towards action, towards our projects and the demands placed on us to perform. But artists, according to Bergson and Hadot, have a predisposition and a talent for perceiving everything "for itself, and no longer

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of existence produced by relations of power and knowledge. Therefore insofar as my existence becomes a field for problematization of discipline, normalization, hermeneutics, etc., it function as an art of resistance.

<sup>10</sup> This represents a contrast with Foucault who makes it clear that he is not retrieving something lost but rather, inevitably creating something new.

<sup>11</sup> Hadot 1995a, 212. May notes the profound difference between Hadot and Foucault on this point (May, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Henri Bergson, quoted in: Hadot, 1995b: 254.

for them. They no longer perceive merely for the sake of action: they perceive for the sake of perceiving; that is, for no reason, for the pure pleasure of it... Might not the role of philosophy be to bring us to a more complete perception of reality, by means of a kind of displacement of our attention?"<sup>13</sup>

For Hadot, as for Bergson and Merleau-Ponty, modern painting provides a powerful lesson to philosophers about the nature of perception and the practice of a life devoted to a truer perception of the world. The discipline of painters such as Cezanne is like that of ancient Stoic, Cynic, and Epicurean philosophers:

The experience of the modern painter lets us make out in a manner which is, in the end, philosophical, the very miracle of the perception which opens the world to us. But this miracle is only grasped thanks to a reflection on perception, a conversion of attention by which we change our relation to the world, by which we marvel at the world... (Hadot, 1995b: 256)

For Hadot this kind of spiritual exercise which aims at a conversion of perception has two complementary ends: a) its goal is the pure pleasure and joy that one takes in seeing the Whole, in re-uniting with the cosmos from which we, as a result of "the utilitarian perception we have of the world" are for the most part estranged; b) this perception frees us from all of the anxieties that this detached and pragmatic form of everyday life produces and enables us to live according to deeper truths and with more permanent and satisfying aims. (Hadot, 1995b: 254) Hadot writes:

I believe firmly [...] that it is possible for modern man to live, not as a sage, [...] but as a practitioner of the ever-fragile exercise of wisdom. This can be attempted, starting out from the lived experience of the concrete, living and perceiving subject, under the triple form defined ...[for example]... by Marcus Aurelius: 1) as an effort to practice objectivity of judgment; 2) as an effort to live according to justice, in the service of the human community; 3) as an effort to become aware of our situation as a part of the universe. Such an exercise of wisdom will thus be an attempt to render oneself open to the universal. (Hadot, 1995a: 212)

In his essay, "Spiritual Exercises", which so influenced Foucault, Hadot extracts from the variety of schools and arts of living invented by ancient philosophers a list of categories of different kinds of spiritual exercise that we might incorporate in the practice of a philosophical way of living.

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<sup>13</sup> Again, Bergson, quoted in Hadot, 1995b: 254.

(Hadot, 1995c) First, there are exercises that train and teach one *how to live*: practices of attention, meditation, gratitude, to name a few. Second, *learning to dialogue* would require practicing an art of speaking in which whatever the ostensible topic of discussion, what is at stake is the meaning of one's own life, *who one is*. Third, *learning to die* involves exercises of detachment from one's desire, needs, material goods, but also detaching oneself from the limiting perspective of the self in order to rise to the cosmic perspective. Finally, *learning how to read*: Hadot writes, "we have forgotten how to read; how to pause, liberate ourselves from our worries, return to into ourselves, and leave aside our search for subtlety and originality, in order to meditate calmly, ruminate, and let the texts speak to us." (Hadot, 1995c: 109)

Hadot believes that the experience of a 'cosmic consciousness' sought by ancient philosophers, even the pure Epicurean pleasure in the simple fact of existence, is a universal possibility revived in phenomenology, in modern painting, and elsewhere in our culture. Philosophy as a way of life, for Hadot, is the continuous effort to re-awaken and re-actualize that experience and perception of the world through the practice of spiritual exercise. This view leads Hadot to a deep appreciation of the plurality of ancient philosophical schools and practices:

It is precisely the plurality of these schools which is precious. It permits us to compare the consequences of different possible fundamental attitudes of reason, it offers a privileged field of experimentation/experience. This obviously supposes that one reduce these philosophies to their spirit, to their essence by detaching them from the superfluous cosmological or mythological elements, and that one draws out the fundamental propositions that they themselves take as essential.(Hadot, 1995d: 273)

Thus Hadot advances a spiritual eclecticism. He associates himself with Nietzsche on this point: "one shouldn't be afraid of following a stoic formula, and then, according to the demands of life, an epicurean formula..." (Hadot, 2002: 387) The purpose is to put to use the spiritual practice that will allow one to attain this primordial and full consciousness or perception of being.

It might be helpful here to indicate a couple of points of contrast between the Hadot and Foucault on philosophy as a way of life.<sup>14</sup> For one, Hadot is explicit in his debt to existentialism and especially it seems to Bergson,

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<sup>14</sup> For example, see May, 2006 and Flynn, 2005.

Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty. Foucault on the other hand resists any affiliation with phenomenology, Sartre, and from the philosophy of existence in general. Foucault's orientation is more comparativist and structuralist—he seeks out the fragmentary, differential and historically contingent. I think these two different orientations are clearly visible in Hadot and Foucault's work and most likely lie at the basis of the different conclusions they come to and the different styles of their work. For example—Hadot centers ancient philosophy around the figure of the sage—the sage is the model of the best life and wisdom is the goal of living philosophically. Hadot's sage is what Foucault might call a "universal intellectual" - the philosopher who speaks the universal meaning of being. In fact, Hadot is able to link the sage's search for wisdom, understood as a cosmic consciousness and the resulting independence, self-mastery, joy in existence, and peace of mind, to the phenomenological attempt to grasp beings themselves as they present themselves in the world. The stoics and epicureans engaged in spiritual exercises in order to convert their gaze away from the distractions and illusions of ordinary human life so that they could re-awaken the primordial consciousness of Nature, the Being that lets all beings be. Thus the ancient attempt to experience and know Nature through spiritual transformation can be linked to phenomenology.

Foucault, on the other hand, multiplies the ancient figures of truth and philosophical life, locating at least four different modes of living philosophically and living the true life—the sage, the master of *techne*, the prophet and the parrhésiast.<sup>15</sup> In the end Foucault favors the parrhésiastic figure and in his description of it we can clearly see a description of the intellectual life that he frequently praised and tried to emulate—a continuous investigation of the irreducible but interrelated axes of power, knowledge and subjectivity, a fragmentary, partial and always provisional form of truth telling that is essentially ethical in its import. Foucault's parrhésiast is always more attuned to the concrete practices of power and seeks a truth that is more disruptive of them than to the universal meaning of being. The parrhésiast is oriented to the historically constructed world of human institutions and attempts to articulate their contingency and thereby the possibility of their transformation. Truth is transformative because the being of human reality is fragmentary, constructed and transformable. If Hadot has recourse to the transformative experience of Being as Nature, Foucault turns to the transformative and marvelous Being of the archive, the repository of things said and made. For example,

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<sup>15</sup> Flynn, 1995

Foucault's brilliant afterword to Flaubert's *Temptation of Saint Anthony* shows how the library itself is a spiritual space:

Possibly Flaubert was responding to an experience of the fantastic which was singularly modern... to the discovery of a new imaginative space in the nineteenth century. This domain of fantasms is no longer the night, the sleep of reason, or the uncertain void that stands before desire, but, on the contrary, wakefulness, untiring attention, zealous erudition, and constant vigilance. Henceforth, the visionary experience arises from the black and white surface of printed signs, from the closed and dusty volume that opens with a flight of forgotten words; fantasies are carefully deployed in the hushed library, with its columns of books, with its titles aligned on shelves to form a tight enclosure, but within confines that also liberate impossible worlds... The fantastic is no longer a property of the heart, nor is it found among the incongruities of nature; it evolves from the accuracy of knowledge [savoir] and its treasures lie dormant in documents. (Foucault, 1998b: 105-6)

While Hadot has recourse to Merleau-Ponty's Cezanne, "communing" with nature, and an aesthetic experience understood as an exercise in allowing nature to come to presence, Foucault turns to Flaubert, to Manet, and to the aesthetics of the constructed, deposited and sedimented riches of the archive: "Flaubert is to the library what Manet is to the museum. They both produced works in a self-conscious relationship to earlier paintings or texts—or rather to the aspect in paint or writing that remains open. They erect their art within the archive." (Foucault, 1998b: 107) Perhaps we can see in this essay from 1967, the outlines of a spiritual exercise, a practice of converting one's gaze in order to see and experience being as a repository of things said and made that have a power to provoke wonder and to detach us from the normalized, bio-political selves that have become all too familiar to us.

I see no reason why we cannot apply the eclecticism so valued by Hadot and Foucault to our reading and use of their own work. Perhaps they present us with two more styles of philosophical life, two more sets of practices, forms of relationship, modes of thinking that allow us to apply thought to life and test life in the exercise of thought.

To conclude let me just suggest that the challenge now, as I see it, is to forge practices for living philosophy that can serve at one and the same time: *diagnosis* of our present in light of power-knowledge-subjectivity; *resistance* to the pathologies of power-knowledge-subjectivity that arise when these extend and intensify themselves through the social and the



individual body; and *ascetic transformation of life and subjectivity* that resists dispositifs not merely by forming mental representations and arguments, but rather by practicing care of the self and arts of living, counter-conducts of thought and life, counter-subjectivities. Doing philosophy would then involve forming new intellectual and practical habits, developing new kinds of knowledge, and new forms of attention to bodies not as biological entities that have medical or psychological problems but as gauges of the investment of power-knowledge-subjectivity. It would involve reading classical texts as a “whole field of possible forms of subjectivity and arts of living” as Foucault suggested in *The Use of Pleasure*. (Foucault, 1990b: 32) It would require seeking different techniques of writing, speaking, listening. It would transform living into a process of problematization and not simply a process of biological and economic productivity. It would see truth in relation to life and grounded upon courage, critique, risk, at least as much as upon coherence, validity, correctness.

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THE *FINAL* FOUCAULT:  
GOVERNMENT OF OTHERS  
AND GOVERNMENT OF THE SELF

ALAN MILCHMAN AND ALAN ROSENBERG

Though he has been dead for almost a quarter of a century, “new” works by Michel Foucault continue to appear, most notably the cycle of lecture courses that he gave at the *Collège de France* during the 1970s and early 1980s, in which he elaborated on seminal concepts such as “race war” and “governmentality” through which he advanced the discussion of the government of *others* in the modern world and adumbrated a new, ethical vision of the relation of the person to him or herself—of the government of oneself—based on the possibilities of *self-fashioning*. However, it is not just the appearance of new works that provides us with a Foucault for the twenty-first century, but also the very form in which we believe Foucault constructed his conceptual arsenal. We read Foucault’s concepts as Heideggerian *formal indications*. In contrast to philosophy understood as a theoretical science or system, and the concepts appropriate to it—concepts that claim to grasp the world as it *really is*—the young Heidegger’s understanding of concepts as formal indications entails that these concepts remain open, that they do not so much provide answers as they raise questions; questions that transfigure the being of the thinker who asks them, questions about which, as Heidegger’s student Hans-Georg Gadamer has claimed, “it remains for each of us to carry out individually our own fulfillment of the thing of which we are given an indication.”<sup>1</sup> As Heidegger said in his 1920-21 winter semester lecture course, “Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion,” “[i]n the formal indication one steps away from any classification; everything is precisely kept

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<sup>1</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Martin Heidegger’s One Path,” in *Reading Heidegger From the Start: Essays in His Earliest Thought*, Edited by Theodore Kisiel and John Van Buren (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 34.

open.”<sup>2</sup> One dimension of reading Foucault’s concepts as formal indications, then, is the acknowledgement that the concepts themselves, as well as the power relations and modes of subjectivity to which they point or indicate, are suffused with *historicity*; that they are not closed or fixed. We believe that reading Foucault in this way is consonant with his own commitment to the writing of “experience books,” to his provocation that we must never be at ease—even, or especially, we would add—with what seems evident.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, for Foucault, as we read him, *thought* is never at rest, never satisfied with answers, no matter how authoritative or convincing they seem. Rather, thought entails a constant activity of problematization; it is what permits one to establish a certain distance from a given way of acting or seeing the world, “to question it as to its meaning, its conditions and its goals. Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem.”<sup>4</sup>

One possible way to read Foucault has its point of departure in his own claim, made at the end of his life, that “my objective... has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects.”<sup>5</sup> One such way is as a result of power relations, “modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects.”<sup>6</sup> So Foucault claims that his focus has been the subject, not power. Let us then pursue this claim, which ties power relations to the transformation of humans into subjects, recognizing that this late claim is no return to a constitutive, originary, a-historical subject, but rather an indication that a subject is a historical creation or product, and that the prevailing, and changing, power relations in a society or culture entail different modes by which a subject “shows up” or appears. Foucault’s own histories have linked the changing modes of objectification through which the subject has been historically produced—what Foucault has designated as the modes of *assujettissement*,

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<sup>2</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 44.

<sup>3</sup> “Ne jamais consentir à être tout à fait à l’aise avec ses propres évidences.” Michel Foucault, “Pour une morale de l’inconfort,” in Michel Foucault, *Dits et Écrits: 1954-1988* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994), III, 787.

<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, “Problematology,” in *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), 421.

<sup>5</sup> Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Second Edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 208.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

or what we will translate as *subjectification*—to the changes in the prevailing power relations. It is on the basis of his inquiry into the changing modes of subjectification that Foucault pursues his historical explorations of the government of others, of how we are governed and how we govern others. Thus, his histories have explored the multiple dimensions of sovereign power, of pastoral power, of disciplinary power, and of bio-power, and their complex web of control over a population. In speaking of *assujettissement*, two related problems immediately arise: the wide range of meanings contained in the term *assujettissement* as Foucault wields it and as we take it as a formal indication, and the translation of it into English by Foucault's several translators and by those who write on Foucault. With respect to its range of meanings, *assujettissement* clearly entails subjugation and "subjection" (the latter term is the one Robert Hurley has used in his translation of *The History of Sexuality*), but that meaning focuses on the passivity of the subject, whereas Foucault sees *assujettissement* as entailing more than just relations of domination or control, as also involving the autonomy, and the possibility of resistance, of the one who is *assujetti*. While that range of meanings may be clear to Francophone readers—probably a minority among those who today read Foucault—it is severely restricted when *assujettissement* is translated as subjugation or "subjection." Acknowledging the active factor in *assujettissement* became especially significant in the mid to late 1970s, when Foucault expanded the purview of his investigation of power relations beyond sovereignty and disciplinary power (with its docile bodies) to include "governmentality," where the reversibility of power relations becomes particularly consequential, and where he accentuates a vision of government through *freedom*. In this regard, Judith Butler has grasped some of the elements of *assujettissement* that have escaped many others: "Power not only *acts on* a subject but, in a transitive sense, *enacts* the subject into being. As a condition, power precedes the subject. Power loses its appearance of priority, however, when it is wielded by the subject, a situation that gives rise to the reverse perspective that power is the effect of the subject, and that power is what the subject effects."<sup>7</sup> However, Butler's own translation of *assujettissement* as "subjection" weakens her otherwise powerful claim, inasmuch as "subjection" privileges the element of domination and control to the detriment of the very autonomy and agency to which she is here pointing.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, in

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<sup>7</sup> Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stamford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997), 13.

<sup>8</sup> Edward McGushin also translates *assujettissement* as "subjection," in the sense of "subjecting (*assujettissement*) individuals to the interpretation of an expert (doctor,

his *Powers of Freedom*, Nikolas Rose translates *assujettissement* as “subjectification,” which seems to us particularly felicitous, as it does not foreclose any of the range of possible meanings that Foucault’s term contains.

Beyond terminology and meaning, we encounter another problem as we grapple with the kinds of power relations and the modes of subjectification to which they are historically linked, especially in terms of a twenty-first century Foucault. Too often, it seems to us, Foucault has been read as if he were describing a succession of societal forms, a serialization of power relations that succeeded one another in the history of the West; as if sovereign power, disciplinary power, and governmentality were *stages*, one disappearing as it was historically succeeded by another. Much of Anglo-Saxon governmentality theory and its prognostications about *neo-liberalism* and the “responsibilization” of the subject; about the end of the *social*; and about the formation of multiple and overlapping “communities” has resonated with such a vision. However, both the events following September 11, 2001, as well as the impact of the current global economic downturn, constitute admonitory warnings about seeing power relations in terms of a succession of discrete stages. In a recent interview, Giorgio Agamben, whose own concept of *homo sacer* owes much to his reading of Foucault, signaled the importance of Foucault’s 1977-78 lecture course at the *Collège de France* (“Security, Territory, Population”) as having become a new paradigm of government, replete with a focus on technologically sophisticated modalities of surveillance of the public space and digital, biometric identity cards to control the movements of individuals, all within the ambit of a renewal of *sovereign power* in new and unprecedented bio-political forms.<sup>9</sup> In a more untrammelled form, Agamben points to a recrudescence of sovereign power in Italian legislation authorizing the expulsion of citizens of European Union countries on “grounds of public security,” to which we might add the American experience of Abu Ghraib or Guantanamo. The whole phenomenon of the “undocumented,” the “illegal alien,” and of anti-immigrant movements, throughout the democratic world should alert us to these new developments. Neither sovereign nor disciplinary power has simply been replaced by governmentality, still less by neo-liberal

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psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, priest).” See Edward F. McGushin, *Foucault’s Askesis: An Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 97.

<sup>9</sup> See “Le gouvernement de l’insécurité: entretien avec Giorgio Agamben” in *La Revue internationale Des Livres et des idées*, No 4, March-April 2008.

modalities of power. Indeed, the present global economic downturn may itself signal drastic changes in neo-liberalism, and a return of the *social* and of power relations, albeit in new forms, appropriate to it. The resistance that a given *dispositif* of power provokes, and encounters, results in modifications and transformations of those very power relations. As Judith Revel has pointed out, “power relations are...in permanent expansion and in continual transformation so as to better adapt themselves to the modifications of a reality that they have themselves helped to transform.”<sup>10</sup> Foucault, provided we avoid a theory of stages, can prepare us to confront the new modalities of the government of *others* that will be instantiated as the new century advances.

What appears to have sent Foucault on his “journey to Greece” after the publication of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality (La volonté de savoir)* in 1976 was the conviction that the model for an alternative to the objectification of the subject on the basis of technologies of domination and control, and their attendant power relations, was possible; that the constitution of a subject in *autonomous* fashion, through practices of *freedom*, through a project of *self-fashioning*, might be found in the history of our own culture, in the ancient world. Foucault believed that the Graeco-Roman world might provide a modality for an *ethical* subject. That long detour between the first volume and the last two of his *History of Sexuality*, as well as the cycle of lecture courses at the *Collège de France* between 1980 and 1984, in which the focus was on how we constitute ourselves as ethical subjects, permitted Foucault to grapple with issues that had received little attention before 1980.

It is in the early 1980s that Foucault, in talking about the government of oneself—how we can fashion ourselves as ethical subjects—seemingly very deliberately introduces a new term into his theoretical toolbox: *subjectivation*.<sup>11</sup> While *assujettissement* or subjectification pertains to how one is objectified as a subject through the exercise of power/knowledge, including the modalities of resistance through which those power relations can be modified or attenuated, *subjectivation* pertains to the relation of the person to him/herself; to the multiple ways in which a self can be fashioned or constructed on the basis of what one takes to be the truth. The introduction of this new term—in the collection of Foucault’s writings,

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<sup>10</sup> Judith Revel, *Michel Foucault: Expériences de la pensée* (Paris: Bordas, 2005), p. 208.

<sup>11</sup> The French term *subjectivation* should entail no translation problems comparable to *assujettissement*: “subjectivation” should do nicely.

*Dits et Écrits*, the first appearance of *subjectivation* is in 1982—and both its meaning and significance have thus far elicited but little mention in the literature.<sup>12</sup> In his path-breaking lecture course on *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, where Foucault first elaborated on his concept of subjectivation, he linked that concept to the deployment of truth. Foucault there contrasted two different relations of the subject to truth, corresponding to what seems to us to be very different modes by which the subject constitutes him/herself. There is a deployment in which “the subject objectifies himself in a true discourse,”<sup>13</sup> one model for which is submission to the law, the moral code, the Book or the text. Historically, that *objectification* of a subject in true discourse has been instantiated in the Christian churches, though its legacy can be found in the totalitarianism of the Stalinist regime in Russia, for example, as Oleg Kharkhordin has sought to demonstrate in his *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices*.<sup>14</sup> Kharkhordin, with ample reference to Foucault, shows that the Russian concept of *soznatelnost*’, which is close to Protestant notions as a “capacity for moral and factual judgment, exercised in accordance with the Holy Word,” and was deeply rooted in Russian religious and cultural traditions, was wielded by the Stalinist regime as a moral term for “a capacity to act in accord with revolutionary doctrine,” a mode of subjectivation that appears consonant with *one*—though just one—of the meanings of this term as Foucault had begun to wield it.<sup>15</sup> In Stalinist Russia, it was a Party tribunal that determined whether or not one possessed *soznatelnost*’, conscience, much as Church courts had under the Tsarist regime. Yet as the practices described by Kharkhordin, or the evidence of the diaries written in Russia during the 1930s by ordinary workers and party members and analyzed by Jochen Hellbeck, show, the deliberate and concerted fashioning of a self by a person, and its attendant practices, undertaken out of devotion to an

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<sup>12</sup> We have discussed the concept of *subjectivation* in Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, “The Aesthetic and Ascetic Dimensions Of An Ethics of Self-Fashioning: Nietzsche And Foucault” in *Parrhesia*, Number 2, 2007, and Edward McGushin has explored the significance of this concept in his *Foucault’s Askesis*, note 6, pp. 304-305.

<sup>13</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 251-252.

<sup>14</sup> See Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study in Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 55ff.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 55ff.



authority, can subjectivate one as a cog in a lethal machine.<sup>16</sup> Foucault himself clearly linked that objectification of a subject in true discourse to a renunciation of self.<sup>17</sup> However, there is another deployment that Foucault introduced in that lecture course, another meaning of subjectivation, one that in our view both constitutes a radically *new* way of grappling with the question of the subject, though one, unhappily, that Foucault did not live to elaborate (a task that will fall to those of us who pursue his indications), and which is *directly* linked to an ethics of self-fashioning.<sup>18</sup> It is the deployment that Foucault designated as “the subjectivation of true discourse,” which “enables us to become the subject of these true discourses, which enables us to become the subject who tells the truth and who is transfigured by this enunciation of the truth, by this enunciation itself, precisely by the fact of telling the truth.”<sup>19</sup> In this subjectivation of true discourse, the person does not defer to the authority of code, Book, or text, on the basis of which he/she shapes a self. Subjectivation of true discourse, as Foucault began to articulate it in this sense, entails “rejoining oneself as the end and object of a technique of life, an art of living. It involves coming together with oneself, the essential moment of which is

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<sup>16</sup> See Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 333. Such a renunciation of self seemed to Foucault to be a hallmark of Christian subjectivation, a conclusion that constitutes a further link to Nietzsche.

<sup>18</sup> Judith Revel, an astute interpreter of Foucault, who does elucidate the meaning of subjectivation, acknowledges that there are modes of subjectivation in the sense of practices of objectivation, as well as a “relation to the self through a certain number of techniques making it possible to constitute oneself as a subject of one’s own existence,” though in her *vocabulaire de Foucault* she does not elaborate on the distinction between the two, or focus on the contrast between them. See Judith Revel, *Le vocabulaire de Foucault* (Paris: Ellipses, 2002), 60-62. In her more recent *Michel Foucault: Expériences de la pensée*, Revel does draw such a contrast, basing it on the distinction between *pouvoir* and *puissance*, concepts rooted in a reading of Spinoza, and developed most recently by Antonio Negri: “That the political task inherent in all social existence proceeds through a rediscovery of the intransitivity of freedom, which makes *puissance* the only conceivable response to power [*pouvoir*], and ontology the only possible politics: an invention of self—and of self with others—that ceaselessly inaugurates a world that power would like to put an end to, but which it will never be able to do.” (229) A question worth pursuing here is whether such a reading takes us from a Foucauldian “ontology of the present” to an ontology *tout court*.

<sup>19</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 332.

not the objectification of the self in a true discourse, but the subjectivation of a true discourse in a practice and exercise of oneself on oneself.”<sup>20</sup>

How, then, are we to distinguish between these two modes of subjectivation; how are we to draw a line of demarcation between them, without recourse to *normative* criteria, which require an a-historical ground, but which Foucault explicitly rejects? One can, of course, insist that Foucault has made a *decision* for one mode of subjectivation over another. One can argue that he has decided against a mode of subjectivation linked to Christian asceticism because “...this manifestation was not for the purpose of establishing one’s sovereign mastery over oneself; what was expected, rather, was humility and mortification, detachment toward oneself and the constitution of a relation with oneself tending toward the destruction of the form of the self.”<sup>21</sup> But we are then still left with the question of the normative, ethical, or political, bases for that decision, as well as with the question that is perhaps much more important: within an *analytic* of subjectivity, can one make clear distinctions between these two modes of subjectivation based on their *formal structures*. This may be more difficult than it appears, inasmuch as both deployments of subjectivation entail freedom, technologies of the self, ascetic practices, and modes of self-fashioning. How then, for example, are we to distinguish, in a way that would be consonant with Foucault’s own life and thinking, between the self-writing instantiated in Greek *hupomnēmata*, where “it was a matter of constituting oneself as a subject of rational action through the appropriation, the unification, and the subjectivation of a fragmentary and selected already-said” from monasticism and the confessional practices where “it will be a matter of dislodging the most hidden impulses from the inner recesses of the soul, thus enabling one to break free of them,”<sup>22</sup> which Foucault saw as integral to Christian renunciation of life?

While it would appear that context—historical, cultural, and personal—is critical, it also seems to us that an analytic of subjectivity requires formal structures integral to experience in order to make it possible to demarcate the two forms of subjectivation—to more clearly distinguish objectification of a subject in true discourse from subjectivation of a true discourse—and we believe that Foucault began to provide us with *formal*

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

<sup>21</sup> Michel Foucault, “On the Government of the Living,” in *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, vol. 1, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 84.

<sup>22</sup> Michel Foucault, “Self-Writing,” in *Ibid.*, 221.

*indications* to that effect. Very briefly, and only to *point* to several elements that are germane here, Foucault indicates four factors that appear to be integral to subjectivation of a true discourse, and which do not appear to be present in the examples of objectification in a true discourse, whether ancient, medieval, or contemporary. First, there is *resistance*, resistance to prevailing power relations, which seems integral to the kinds of subjectivation that characterizes self-fashioning and autonomy. Second, this mode of subjectivation seems to be closely linked by Foucault to *parrhesia*, political (speaking truth to power, even at the risk of death) and ethical. Third, *critique*, as delineated in Foucault's confrontation with Kant, also seems integral to this deployment of subjectivation. And fourth, such a mode of subjectivation entails a *problematization* of the contemporary world, as opposed to accommodation with it, which seems more consonant with objectification of the subject in a true discourse, as exemplified by the kind of private confession linked to the writings of John Cassian, the practices of *exomologesis* as articulated by Tertullian, or the confessions of the accused at the Moscow trials.

At the heart of the Foucauldian distinction between these two modes of subjectivation, between objectification and subjectivation of true discourse, is that in the case of the former one accepts a truth whose authority is purportedly beyond question and which lies outside the self, while in the case of the latter the enunciation of the truth arises from the subject's own practices of freedom, *from a choice*. For Foucault, the subjectivation of true discourse is the veritable core of his *ethics*—and the fourfold through which he elucidates it—which he firmly links to a practice of *freedom*: “for what is ethics, if not the practice of freedom, the conscious [*réfléchie*] practice of freedom?”<sup>23</sup> Subjectivation of true discourse, as we have suggested, is closely linked to both Foucault's concept of *askesis*, in contrast to Christian asceticism,<sup>24</sup> and to the concept of *parrhesia*, truth-telling. In his 1982 lecture course on the hermeneutics of the subject, Foucault contrasts ethical *parrhesia* in the ancient world to the “flattery” of the rhetoricians. Ethical *parrhesia* “is anti-flattery in the sense that in *parrhesia*, there is indeed someone who speaks to the other, but, unlike what happens in flattery, he speaks to the other in such a way that this other *will be able to form an autonomous, independent, full and*

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<sup>23</sup> Michel Foucault, “The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom,” in *The Essential Works of Foucault: 1954-1984*, vol. 1, 284.

<sup>24</sup> For an analysis of the differences between Foucauldian *askesis* and Christian asceticism, see Milchman and Rosenberg, “The Aesthetic and Ascetic Dimensions of an Ethics of Self-Fashioning.”

*satisfying relationship to himself.* The final aim of *parrhesia* is not to keep the person to whom one speaks dependent upon the person who speaks—which is the case in flattery.”<sup>25</sup> The self-fashioning of an ethical subject, her subjectivation to true discourse, which Foucault here claims is the “aim” of ethical *parrhesia*, nonetheless requires an analysis of the historico-cultural conditions under which such a process is possible, as well as a “thicker” analysis of its actual modalities, and the ways in which one can clearly distinguish between the two kinds of subjectivation, the contours of which he had only just begun to delineate—one more task for those of us who seek a Foucault for the twenty-first century.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps the very newness of the concept and term, as well as the lack of time that Foucault had to refine its use, led Foucault to designate both of the two modalities through which the subject acted upon itself as “subjectivation,” even as he utilized the *same* term to designate the specific modality—upon which we focus here—through which the enunciation of truth and the fashioning of a self arose from the subject’s own freedom, and not from a relationship with an unquestioned and unquestionable authority. Yet the contrast between these two modalities points to a distinction that we believe it will be fruitful to enrich and develop if Foucault is to be as relevant to the twenty-first century, and its politico-cultural battles as he was to the century just past. Just as we believe the transformations of power relations will continue, so too will the resistance through which human beings seek to fashion a self, new modalities for their subjectivation. Indeed, Foucault himself forged a direct link between resistance to political power and an “ethic of the self,” despite his fears concerning the prospects for the latter: “there is no first or final point of resistance to political power other than in the relationship one has to oneself.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 379; our emphasis.

<sup>26</sup> Perhaps there is one more issue to which we can at least *point*: the possibility that Foucault’s “journey to Greece” toward the end of his life also *indicated* the prospects for exploring a new vision of the *polis* and of political life, one very different from the life of the ancient *polis*, in which how we govern others and ourselves in a community entailing *agonal* relations can also be based on persons who fashion their own selves.

<sup>27</sup> Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 252.

# THE CONCEPT OF SUBJECTIVATION: A CENTRAL ISSUE IN GOVERNMENTALITY AND GOVERNMENT OF THE SELF

MARIA BONNAFOUS-BOUCHER,  
TRANSLATED BY MICHAEL LAVIN

## Introduction

In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*<sup>1</sup>, Foucault lays the groundwork for what would later become the concept of governmentality—a term he used to examine the relationships between the self and other selves. This approach implies that governmentality encompasses a set of practices by which freedom can be constituted, defined and organized into individual categories. Foucault writes: “Here, although the status of individual liberty is a determining factor, it seems that scholars have produced few analyses of it. Yet the notion of governmentality makes it possible to emphasize the liberty of the subject and its relationship with others, or, in other words, to clarify what constitutes the very substance of ethics.”<sup>2</sup> In effect, governmentality presupposes, on the one hand, techniques and instrumental processes, and, on the other, strategic games which render power relations unstable and reversible. That is why governmentality assumes the task of examining the relations between the self and others, implying that, within governmentality, the objective is a set of practices by which freedom is constituted, defined and organized through individual strategies. For this reason, the concept of subjectivation appears as an essential element in the articulation of political philosophy and the philosophy of ethics: from a Foucauldian standpoint, both

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault, Michel. “Le dispositif de sexualité.” In *Histoire de la sexualité, tome I, La Volonté de savoir*, Paris: Gallimard NRF, 1976, 99.

<sup>2</sup> Foucault, Michel. “Le dispositif de sexualité.” In *Histoire de la sexualité, tome I, La Volonté de savoir*, Paris: Gallimard NRF, 1976, 99.

converge on the practice of subjectivation, considered as a condition of freedom. This assertion raises some general questions: How is subjectivation, as the condition of freedom, situated between governmentality and government of the self, or, in other words, how can governmentality, considered as a political rationality, be linked to the government of the self? How are the governmentality of liberalism, on the one hand, and the government of the self on the other, both involved in a process of subjectivation, and thereby mutually implicated in a common quest for freedom (one which is not merely an opposition to domination)? How can the process of subjectivation be considered as a quest for freedom, when (since the process of subjectivation is itself always incomplete), it has the same, indeterminate nature as freedom?<sup>3</sup> These are some of the general questions that circulate within the discussion that follows, wherein the concept of subjectivation as a practice of freedom is explored in its multidimensional significance through a series of considerations. In what follows, the concept of subjectivation is considered in its positive and negative meanings, as alternately implying a subordination of the subject to power, and as suggesting the enactment of a positive freedom—a tension that is reflected in the terms subjectivation and desubjectivation, or *désasujettissement*. Following from this, the active stance of subjectivation is drawn against the passive stance attributed to the subject of philosophy, particularly where the latter is considered through a Cartesian lens. And finally, subjectivation is discussed in relation to practices of knowledge production, mediated by procedures of knowledge production, or the episteme of a given *dispositif*, or “apparatus”. This is illustrated in a reflection on existential knowledge (or *savoir*) and objectivable knowledge (or *connaissance*) as it bears on practices of subjectivation. Throughout, this article, it is argued that subjectivation, as the practice of freedom, enables an indeterminable free subjectivity, situated between a political system of liberal governmentality (public life) on the one hand, and the government of the self (private life) on the other.

## **1. Subjectivation between political philosophy and moral philosophy, or from governmentality to the government of the self**

The concept of governmentality was elaborated in two courses delivered

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<sup>3</sup> See the classical opposition between liberty and determination in *Metaphysics*.

by Foucault at the Collège de France. The first, *The Birth of Bio-Politics*, was given from 1978 to 1979 and published in France in 2004<sup>4</sup>, and the second, *The Government of the Self and Others*, was delivered between 1982 and 1983 and published in France with its original title, *Le Gouvernement de soi et des autres*. It should, however, be noted that between *The Birth of Bio-Politics* and *The Government of the Self and Others*, Foucault delivered three courses, only one of which, *L'Herméneutique du sujet (The Hermeneutics of the Subject)* (1981-1982), has been published. However, *Du gouvernement des vivants (The Government of the Living)*, a course given between 1979 and 1980; *Subjectivité et Vérité (Subjectivity and Truth)* (1980-1981); and the second part of *Le Gouvernement de soi et des autres (The Government of the Self and Others)* (1983-1984) have not yet been published in book form.

With that said, it is worth asking precisely where, between governmentality and government of the self, the concept of subjectivation is situated.

Generally speaking, governmentality expresses a certain type of political rationality associated with a set of specific techniques of government. As such, any given mode of governmentality is always specified within given historical periods: government through biotechnology, for example, is a technique of governmental rule specific to societies of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>5</sup> There is, therefore, not just one political rationality, but different political rationalities corresponding to different periods in history: the pastoral period, *raison d'État*, and biopolitics, or biopolitical liberalism, are each associated with their respective historical moments. Moreover, among this range of options, the governmentality of liberalism is worthy of close examination as it is precisely through this form of governmentality that the government of the self is linked most obviously with a political rationality. The central dictum of liberal governmentality could be summarized in the phrase: “we always govern too much”. Foucault refers here to Benjamin Franklin and calls this rule the internal rule of liberalism.<sup>6</sup> Is this rule the

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<sup>4</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Naissance de la biopolitique*, course given at the Collège de France 1978-1979. Paris: Gallimard Seuil (Hautes Études), October 2004; *Le Gouvernement de soi et des autres*, course given at the Collège de France, 1982-1983. Paris: Gallimard Seuil (Hautes Études), January 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Bonnafous-Boucher, Maria. *Un libéralisme sans liberté*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000, 2004

<sup>6</sup> Foucault, Michel. “Naissance de la biopolitique.” In *Résumé de cours 1970-1982. Conférences, Essais et Leçons du Collège de France*, Paris : Julliard, 1989, 108

foundation underlying the governmentality of liberalism? Certainly. Following Foucault, we can say that one of the foundation stones of liberal rationality is the exercise of a political rationality that creates a bridge between private and public life. Indeed, within liberal forms of governmentality, the sphere of freedom belonging to each individual expresses itself at the interface between public life and private life. Foucault makes this point: “Governmentality presupposes, on the one hand, techniques and instrumental processes, and, on the other, strategic games which render power relations unstable and reversible. That is why governmentality assumes the task of analyzing the relations between one self and another, which means that governmentality aims to foster a set of practices by which freedom can be constituted, defined and organized by means of individual strategies.” What Foucault is suggesting is that, in terms of the relationships established through the care of the self, freedom is defined as the way in which the individual establishes a unique relationship with a rule, and recognizes his or her obligation to observe it.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, I would emphasize the indeterminate nature of this process: while on the one hand, there is an effect of “desubjectivation” (*désasujétissement*), on the other there is the affirmation of a free individual who determines, by means of that affirmation, his or her own singularity. It should be noted that “desubjectivation” does not, strictly speaking, imply a simple account of the liberation of the subject. Foucault maintains a fairly prudent attitude to the issue: “liberation implies that the locks have been sprung, and that Mankind finds itself with itself; liberation is [therefore] insufficient as an explanation of the practices of freedom.”<sup>8</sup> Freedom, in other words, is elaborated by constituting free acts, or acts which gradually diverge from dominant techniques and forge new, adequate techniques. Thus, freedom, far from being established or instituted in a *de facto* manner, is deduced from a series of processes, of which subjectivation is the most important. Subjected subjects become liberated subjects through the effect of the positivity of power, or specific tensions between exterior and imposed rules, between adapted and adopted rules, the ones of which we are ourselves the authors. *The History of Sexuality* provides a convincing illustration of this process, the result of which is subjectivation, understood as a transition which makes it possible to elaborate free subjectivities, or to constitute singular individuals as a kind of a fiction of/within liberalism.

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<sup>7</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Histoire de la sexualité, L'usage des plaisirs*. Paris: Gallimard NRF, 1984.

<sup>8</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Dits et Écrits, 1954-1988, tome IV, 1980-1988*. Paris, Gallimard: 1994, 710.



## 2. The process of subjectivation and freedom

This section of the paper deals with the relationship between subjectivation and the constitution of freedom and, with this in view, includes a detailed description of the process of subjectivation.

### 2.1 Subjectivation and the constitution of freedom

If subjectivation is the process whereby individuals constitute themselves through an act of empowerment affected through the government of the self, the outcome of such a process is always uncertain. This uncertainty derives from the indeterminate nature of our relationships, both with the techniques through which subjectivation is affected, and with others that populate our public lives. In this regard, free acts are not already constituted, but must be elaborated through the practice of subjectivation itself. The free act is, therefore, a practice rather than a principle. Following Foucault<sup>9</sup>, we can say that: “Freedom is a practice” to the extent that it is “a way of acting oriented toward objectives, and which is regulated by continuous reflection.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, projects designed to modify certain constraints—to render them more flexible, or even to break them down entirely—can always exist *de facto*, but none of these projects can guarantee that people are automatically free. People’s freedom is never guaranteed by the institutions and laws whose function it is to guarantee them. That is why those laws and institutions can be manipulated. Not because they are ambiguous, but because freedom is that which must be exercised. “Therefore [...]” writes Foucault, “I believe that the exercise of freedom is never dependent on the structure of things. What guarantees freedom is freedom.”<sup>11</sup> To clarify this point: freedom as the exercise of freedom is the guarantee of freedom; the principle does not pre-exist the practice. Foucault reiterates this theme in his course on biopolitics: liberalism is neither considered as a doctrine with its own principles, nor as the construction of a system of which liberty is the central idea, nor as a political ideal, nor even as a dominant ideology. For Foucault, liberalism is a practice, or, in other words, the implementation of a type of rationality

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<sup>9</sup> Foucault, Michel. “Naissance de la biopolitique.” In *Résumé de cours 1970-1982. Conférences, Essais et Leçons du Collège de France*, Paris: Julliard, 1989.

<sup>10</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Dits & Écrits, 1954-1988, tome IV, 1980-1988*, Paris: Gallimard, 1994, 275; *Espace, Savoir, Pouvoir*, Skyline, March 1982, 16.

<sup>11</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Dits & Écrits, 1954-1988, tome IV, 1980-1988*, Paris: Gallimard, 1994, 275; *Espace, Savoir, Pouvoir*, Skyline, March 1982, 16-20

which uses a specific political technology—a rationality which individuals are obligated to confront, yet which does not provide a determinate framework for free acts.

## 2.2 Definitions of subjectivation

The point was made earlier that the concept of subjectivation is located at the intersection of the governmentality of liberalism and the government of the self. Insofar as it is a permanent invention of the self, acting at once against and with imposed rules, subjectivation introduces a form of subjectivity which bears a closer resemblance to an aesthetics of the self than to a form of ethics understood in the traditional sense, and for this reason posits more of a composition of disparate elements of the self than an unambiguous identity.

Having established this point, the section that follows will move on to focus on the invention of subjectivation as a basis for the conceptualization of freedom.

“Subjectivation” has sometimes been read as “the manner in which a human being is transformed into a subject.” This is precisely what Judith Revel wrote.<sup>12</sup> But it is in a later text (that first appeared in 1984 under the pseudonym of Maurice Florence) that we find the clearest explanation of “subjectivation” in terms of an alternative to a theory of the subject. In this article,<sup>13</sup> “subject” means two things: a *subjectum* and a process: 1) subject as *subjectum* (“thrown under”), or, in other words, “subjected to the Other by control and dependence.” The Other is, in this context, an aggressive (menacing) figure. But what kind of control and dependency is exerted by the Other on the subject? It is not entirely clear. 2) The process by which the subject, since it has come to know itself through the utilization of techniques of the self, determines “the position that it occupies in the real or the imaginary to become a legitimate subject of a specific type of knowledge.” These meanings will be explored in turn.

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<sup>12</sup> Revel, Judith. “Subjectivation (processus de).” In *Dictionnaire Foucault*, Paris, Ellipses: 2008, 128-129.

<sup>13</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Dits & Écrits, 1954-1988, tome IV, 1980-1988*, Paris: Gallimard, 1994, 631-636; and Maurice. “Foucault.” In *Dictionnaire des philosophes* edited by Denis Huisman. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1984, 942-944.

### 2.2.1 Subject and subjectivation

The root of the term “subjectivation” suggests that it inaugurates a new birth of the subject. In reality, however, the meaning of the term is more precise. Subjectivation, above all else, tends toward the abolition of the classical, unified, coherent, stable, a-historical, and self-constructed subject—what we might generalize as the subject of philosophy.<sup>14</sup> Foucault underlines this point: “I had to reject a certain *a priori* theory of the subject in order to be able to proceed to an analysis of the relationships that can exist between the constitution of the subject and different forms of subjects, truth games, practices of power, etc.”<sup>15</sup> Foucault continues: “[The subject] is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not always identical to itself. You don’t have the same relationship with yourself when you constitute yourself as a political subject going to the polling booth or delivering a speech at a meeting, and when you try to realize your desires in a sexual relationship. There probably exist relationships and interferences between these different forms of subject, but we are not dealing with the same kind of subject here. In all these circumstances, we are playing, establishing different forms of relationship with the self. And it’s precisely the historical constitution of these different forms of subject in their relation to truth games that interests me.”<sup>16</sup> As some commentators have highlighted: “[T]his concrete, differentiated, and therefore multiple character of the subject according to domains, power and government relations, techniques of the self, and to the relations of knowledge (*connaissance*) that it has with itself, is even more differentiated than we might imagine—but what we are dealing with here is not another problem, but a different modality of the same problem, the modality of the contemporary subject.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, the specific outcome of a practice of subjectivation is neither a knowledge (*connaissance*) of the self, nor the recognition on the part of the Other of a determinate subjectivity.

But let us return for a moment to Foucault’s opposition to the subject of philosophy, which he undertakes on the basis of the alternatives posed by an active and passive disposition. While on the one hand, subjectivation is

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<sup>14</sup> De Libera, Alain. *Archéologie du sujet : Naissance du sujet*, Paris: Vrin, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Foucault, Michel. “L’éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté.” In *Dits & Écrits, 1954-1988, tome IV*, Paris, Gallimard: 1994, 718.

<sup>16</sup> Foucault, Michel. “L’éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté.” In *Dits & Écrits, 1954-1988, tome IV*. Paris, Gallimard: 1994, 718.

<sup>17</sup> Foucault, Michel. “L’éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté.” In *Dits & Écrits, 1954-1988, tome IV*. Paris, Gallimard: 1994, 718-729

associated with an active relation of self-production, on the other, the philosophy of the modern subject assumes a passive stance. This characterization could be objected to on some levels: one could claim that some measure of activity is located in the certitude of the doubting subject of modernity. It could also be objected that metaphysical meditation reveals the subject's power to doubt, or, in other words, to desire. The thinking subject being the only one that knows it exists, that is capable of desiring and doing, of saying "I". Yet, in spite of these objections, the subject remains, for Foucault, "that which is subordinate", "that which is underlying." In the history of political texts, for example, the subject is that which submits to an authority, to a responsibility, to an obligation. That is the place of the subject in *Leviathan*. In that regard, Foucault does not primarily refer to subjectivity as being conscious of itself, as a reflective substance which takes cognizance of itself as the primary source of consciousness. While it is true that, at times, the history of sexuality coincides with the ontological and the existential, this coincidence is largely confined to the body. Descartes did not talk about this (or, at least not in the same way): the subject or substance, even thinking, is termed as thinking because acts referred to as intellectual "reside" within it. "The character of receptivity always seems to be more important than that of activity: the thinking substance is not the cause of my thoughts."<sup>18</sup>

Inquiries into the specific place of subjectivation in philosophical discourse on the subject have sought to disclose the distinction between the inherent and attributive subject, or between the ontological and logical subject, thus situating subjectivation in a subject-person-individual semantic chain. But such a discussion is not the aim of this inquiry. Indeed, as Gilles Deleuze has pointed out, subjectivation escapes the bounds of the philosophy of the subject because, "there is no inside for Foucault. There is only outside."<sup>19</sup> Deleuze sees that very clearly. To maintain that Foucault separates himself from the concept of intentionality is the same as saying "that conscience aims at the thing, and signifies itself in the world." And again, "phenomenology restores a psychological approach to the syntheses of conscience and meanings, a naturalism of raw experience and of things, of the *laisser-être* of things in the world." But Foucault conducts his argument on the basis of a knowledge-power-self

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<sup>18</sup> Descartes, René. "Troisièmes objections faites par un célèbre philosophe anglais avec les réponses de l'auteur." In *Œuvres philosophiques 1638-1642, Tome II*, edited by Ferdinand Alquié. Paris: Garnier, 1967, 606-607.

<sup>19</sup> Deleuze, Gilles. "Le plissement ou le dedans de la pensée (subjectivation)." In *Foucault*, Paris: Éditions de Minuit, Paris: 1976, 101.

triad, leaving little room for either intentionality or the tutelary and abstract figure of the Other. Deleuze<sup>20</sup> writes: “Thought thinks its own history (past) in order to free itself from what it thinks (present) and at last be able to think differently (future). It is what Blanchot called ‘the passion of the exterior’, a force that ‘is only drawn toward the exterior because the exterior itself has become the intimate, the intrusive.’”<sup>21</sup> Through such opposition to the classical subject, Foucault complicated any form of cooperation that might exist between the existential and empirical dimension of the individual, and the knowledge that it produces, not only about itself but about things existing in the outside world. But this complication, this way of situating the self in the world between lived experience and objectifiable knowledge (*connaissance*) is the beginning of the process of subjectivation.

### **2.2.2 The process of subjectivation between existential knowledge (savoir) and objectifiable knowledge (connaissance)**

In the process of subjectivation there is, since subjectivation and objectification cannot be divided, something that links existential experience and the *episteme*.<sup>22</sup> In effect, in all periods of history,

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<sup>20</sup> Deleuze, Gilles. “Les plissements ou le dedans de la pensée.” In *Foucault*, Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1976, 127 and following.

<sup>21</sup> See Foucault, Michel. “Extériorité / intériorisation.” In *Dits & Écrits, 1954-1988, tome I, 1954-1969*, Paris: Gallimard, 1994, 518 and following; “La pensée du dehors”. *Critique* 229, (June 1966): 523-46; “*Sur Maurice Blanchot*” In *Dits & Écrits, 1954-1988, tome I*, 521: “Sade and Holderlin provided the foundations of exterior thought for the century to come ... The first rent through which exterior thought appeared before our eyes was, paradoxically, effected by Sade’s well-worn monologue. In the era of Kant and Hegel, at a time when the interiorization of the law of history and the world had probably never been more imperiously demanded by the Western consciousness, Sade gave voice only to naked desire as the lawless law of the world. It was in the same period that the poetry of Holderlin manifested the scintillating absence of the gods and announced, as a new law, the obligation to wait, no doubt eternally, for the enigmatic aid provided by ‘God’s default’ [...] This experience resurfaced with Nietzsche’s discovery that all Western metaphysics is linked not only to its grammar, but to those who, speaking, monopolize the right to speak.”

<sup>22</sup> Foucault, Michel. “Réponse à une question”, *Esprit*, 371, (May 1968): 850-874; Foucault, Michel. *Dits & Écrits, 1954-1988, tome I, 1954-1969*, Paris: Gallimard, 1994, 673 and following; “La vérité et les formes juridiques” / «A verdade e formas jurídicas», translated by J.W. Prado, Cadernos, P/U/C, 16, June 1974, Conferences held at the Catholic Pontifical University of Rio de Janeiro, May 21-

subjectivation presupposes the mediation of procedures of verification, of *dispositifs*, of statements about practices. That is the reason why becoming involved in the process of subjectivation means creating the history of such “verifications” within the history of “subjectivation.” These verifications, which are, of course, normalizing, inform subjectivated subjects in various periods of history. They also refer back to “practices which divide the subject within itself and which classify it and make it into an object—as with the division between the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, normal people and criminals” [...]. In fact, these modes of verification constitute what Foucault describes as “the techniques of governmentality.” Such is Foucault’s positivist standpoint as he describes instances of what could be termed subjective objectivation, characterized by the grammarian subject, the linguistic subject and the economic subject. Through these verifications there co-exist not only a knowledge (*connaissance*) of the self which could be linked to something more than the factual existence of an “I”, but one which could be linked to a process of anthropological objectivation: I am a citizen of the world, constructing my life, making use of the world, and in that regard my purpose is universally anthropological wherever I make use of the world, whatever its customs, rules, etc. may be. In this respect, it is easy to see the influence exerted on Foucault’s thought by Kant’s *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. As is well known, Foucault both translated and provided a commentary on Kant’s text.<sup>23</sup> Foucault’s supplementary thesis on the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* for his State doctorate, and his 1954 introduction to Binswanger’s *Dream and Existence*, throw light on the anthropological content of the philosopher’s project. His anthropology not only focuses, naturally enough, on human existence, but also on the “real content of an existence which is lived and felt, which recognizes itself or loses itself in a world which is at once the plenitude of its project and the element of its situation.”<sup>24</sup> In this project, Foucault

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May 25, 1973, 5-113; Foucault, Michel. *Dits et Écrits, 1954-1988, tome II, 1970-1975*, Paris, Gallimard: 1994, 538 and following.

<sup>23</sup> Foucault, Michel. “Introduction à l’Anthropologie.” In Immanuel Kant. *Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique*, translated by Michel Foucault, Paris: Vrin, 2008, 11-79. “Introduction à l’Anthropologie”, written between 1959 and 1960 as a supplement to Foucault’s principal thesis, *L’Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique*. Foucault worked on the translation between 1959 and 1960 when he was the head of the city’s Institut français. Hamburg is close to Rostock where Kant’s archives were held.

<sup>24</sup> Foucault, Michel. “Introduction à l’Anthropologie.” In Immanuel Kant. *Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique*. Paris: Vrin, 2008, 11.

constantly balances two seemingly opposed objectives: on the one hand, an anthropology which addresses the individual as a contemporary, who, as Foucault puts it, “problematizes his relationship with the present, his historical mode of being and the constitution of the self as an autonomous being”<sup>25</sup> and on the other, an ontology of a different order, which “rigorously develops the existential content of its presence in the world.” Subjectivation provides an idea of the risk Foucault is running when he combines the human and metaphysical sciences in a single philosophical project. “Objectivation and subjectivation are not independent of each other [...]; it is from their mutual development and their reciprocal ties that are born what could be called ‘truth games’, or, in other words, not the discovery of true things, but of the rules according to which what the subject can say about certain things reveals the question of what is true and what is false.”<sup>26</sup>

What a subject can say about the world and about itself is linked to a field of knowledge (*savoir*) rendered possible by subjectivation. This knowledge is linked to a very particular process which, in terms of method, cannot be reproduced: no process of subjectivation resembles any other; to become a singularity, any sovereign “I” must be entirely discarded. Subjectivated does not precisely mean that the once subject “I” becomes “rebellious”. Its action is affirmative, it neutralizes the rule and lays waste its efficiency, it decomposes what is imposed on it as moral, or, rather, as moralizing exteriority. And in this process of subjectivation, the status of knowledge (both *connaissance* and *savoir*) is mixed: there is not, on the one hand, an epistemic subject, or, in other words, a subject historically constituted from determinants exterior to it, as in *Les Mots et les choses*, and on the other, a subjectivity fashioned by experiences of another kind, for example by sexual practices. The subject becomes objectivated in practices which produce a field of knowledge (*savoir*). This objectifiable *savoir* constitutes a pattern of existence which is not a given but which is, instead, constructed in the relationship between the subject and a series of chosen or imposed practices. That is why the narrative of the self is in some sense abridged, necessarily unstable and incomplete while the subject forms and informs itself during the process of

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<sup>25</sup> Foucault, Michel. “What is Enlightenment?” In Rabinow, Paul. *The Foucault Reader*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984, 32. Foucault, Michel. “Qu’est-ce que les Lumières ?” In *Dits et Écrits, 1954-1988, tome IV, 1980-1988*, Paris: Gallimard, 1994, 571.

<sup>26</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Dits et Écrits, 1954-1988, tome IV, 1980-1988*, Paris, Gallimard: 1994, 632.

subjectivation. On this basis, it is possible to disagree with the position advanced by Judith Revel, whose interpretation of subjectivation is elaborated on the basis of “modes of subjectivation corresponding to two types of analysis: on the one hand, modes of objectivation which transform human beings into subjects—which means that the only subjects are objectivated subjects and that modes of subjectivation are, in this sense, practices of objectivation; and, on the other, the way in which the relationship to the self by means of a certain number of techniques of the self enables us to constitute ourselves as subjects of our own existence.”<sup>27</sup> Foucault’s approach is more complex and inventive. To fully understand its complexity, the techniques involved in the process of subjectivation must be taken into account.

Subjectivation, then, is a process which tends toward the singular; we do not know exactly what we will find at the end of it. The uncertainty resides in the capacity to situate the self vis-à-vis one or more techniques. Foucault writes: “I call ‘governmentality’ the meeting between techniques of domination exercised on others and techniques of the self.”<sup>28</sup> Moreover, governmental regimes through which techniques of subjectivation are administered and disseminated reach their apogee at particular political moments. In the case of liberalism, which operates under the mandate that “too much government is a bad thing”, we do not know how a singularity will dispose of the disparate elements of this process, nor what ultimate outcome will result from practices of subjectivation. The verb “to dispose” is, of course, linked to “dispositifs”, or, in other words, “apparatuses.”<sup>29</sup> It should be recalled that, for Foucault, these techniques fall into four major categories: 1) production techniques by means of which we are able to create, transform and manipulate objects; 2) techniques such as language, which create the possibility of using signs, symbols and meanings; 3) power techniques, which determine the behavior of individuals in society; and 4) techniques of the self, which enable individuals to carry out, either alone or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their bodies and souls, on the way they think and on their mode of being; to

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<sup>27</sup> Revel, Judith. “Subjectivation (processus de).” In *Dictionnaire Foucault*, Paris, Ellipses: 2008, 128.

<sup>28</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Technologies of the Self. A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press: 1988, 16-49; *Dits et Écrits, 1954-1988, tome IV, 1980-1988*, Paris, Gallimard: 1994, 785.

<sup>29</sup> On this point, see Agamben, Giorgio, *Che cos'è un dispositivo ?* Rome: Nottetempo, 2006, which refers to Foucault, Michel. *Dits et Écrits, 1954-1988, tome III, 1976-1979*, Paris: Gallimard, 1994, 299 and following.



transform themselves in order to reach a particular state of being. In fact, these four types of techniques do not function autonomously: governmentality itself is nothing other than the interaction between these different techniques, and the effects they generate through the way in which they act together.

To properly apprehend the singularizing effect of subjectivation as a practice operating between these respective techniques, it is necessary to pay special attention to the third and fourth meanings listed above—the techniques of power and the techniques of the self—which, Foucault argues, are more closely tied to subjectivation. While Foucault examines these processes in many empirical cases, one of his most provocative analyses focuses on the classical literary genre of the *hupomnēmata* in a discussion of ethical practice in the ancient world which departs from the context of modern liberalism entirely. Let us take a closer look at this literary genre and the specific manner in which it mediates the relation of subjectivation.<sup>30</sup> *Hupomnēmata* are at once “account books, public registers, and personal notebooks used as memory aids.” They are “books for living” and “guides of conduct” which numerous cultivated people availed themselves of at the time of Plutarch. Fundanus’s request, received from Plutarch, the biographer of famous men, provides an illustrative case: when Fundanus asked Plutarch for advice about how to calm the agitations of his soul, the orator, general and strategist did not have the time to write a treatise. Instead, he sent his friend the *hupomnēmata* he had written for him on the theme of the tranquility of the soul. These tools are not intimate diaries or narratives of spiritual experience. They are not narratives of the self (and I quote Foucault here): “their aim is not let in the light of day in the manner of an *arcana conscientiae*, the written or oral avowal of which had a purifying value ... The movement they attempt to promote is inverse: they are designed to record what has already been said, gather together what has already been heard and read, all this in view of the construction of the self.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, for Foucault, the *hupomnēmata* can be grasped as a literary genre suggestive of a “fiction of existence.” Indeed, the widespread use of such texts in an ancient culture marked by the value of citation and the already said (one that is reflected in the Stoics’ practice of writing literary letters to friends, and producing

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<sup>30</sup> Foucault, Michel. “L’écriture de soi.” In *Dits et Écrits, 1954-1988, tome IV, 1980-1988*, Paris: Gallimard, 1994, 418 and following. Foucault, Michel. “L’autoportrait”, *Corps écrit* 5, (February 1983): 3.

<sup>31</sup> Foucault M. *Dits et Écrits, 1954-1988, tome IV, 1980-1988*. Paris, Gallimard: 1994, 419.

examinations of the self and acts of remembering or *askêsis*), mirrors similar practices in contemporary life, illustrated in forms of verification such as psychoanalytical cures and legal enquiries.<sup>32</sup> As such, the *hupomnêmata* are technical devices able to produce subjectivation on condition that their intrinsic principle is not taken literally: to wear the mantle of the sage, to be quasi-intemporal and disincarnate.

My point is that techniques of subjectivation enable specific transformations to occur. They affect a turn from a (passively) subjected subject to an (active) individual who accedes to a constructed individuality by gradually assuming a set of practices which are interiorized through their very act of being chosen.<sup>33</sup> These practices imply the use of techniques. It should be noted that the result of subjectivation should be grasped not as a subject liberated from domination, but as a sedimentary layer of practices added to something else. And such an “addition to something else” is not a recognition of the self, but, rather, a composition, a constitution, a singularity that, in its inconsistency, undermines modern subjectivity itself.

### **2.2.3 The result of subjectivation: An undeterminable and, consequently, free singularity**

Subjectivation produces a very particular type of knowledge (*savoir*) which tends toward the emergence, or even the unveiling, of a singularity in its existence. It is sometimes based on an experience as rigorous as it is stoical, other times more pleasurable and playful. This mixed knowledge (*savoir*) gives us an understanding of the systematic and generalizing process which transports the subject from a state of *assujétissement* (subjugation) to one of archetypal subjectivity, and, finally, to a state of singularity. On this basis, we can say that subjectivation can be described in terms of three general characteristics, 1) it destabilizes a classical conception of the philosophy of the subject, which, in its harmony with itself, is situated at once within a practical and a moral philosophy; 2) it desubjectivates a self-centered subject and triggers the emergence of a historical subjectivity; and, 3) this subjectivity, which is historically different and different within its own history, reveals a singularity.

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<sup>32</sup> Foucault, Michel. “La vérité et les formes juridiques.” In *Dits & Écrits, 1954-1988, tome II, 1970-1975*, Paris: Gallimard, 1994, 538-646.

<sup>33</sup> Hadot, Pierre. “Réflexions sur la notion de culture de soi.” In *Michel Foucault, philosophe*, edited by Pierre Hadot, International Meeting, Paris, 9, 10, 11 January, 1988.

But this subjectivity produced by subjectivation is not, as we have seen, linked to identity, where identity is taken to refer to the unified substance that is the object of the philosophy of the subject discussed earlier. The finality of the subjectified subject is not the creation of an identity, but the composition of experiences and, in that sense, it is itself a composite form. In fact, Foucault wrote, as we recall, that the subject is itself not a substance but a form, or, more precisely, a plurality of forms.<sup>34</sup> The relationships we have with ourselves are not relationships based on identity: “they are more like relationships of differentiation, creation and innovation.”<sup>35</sup> As Foucault wrote, it’s a bore to be always the same.<sup>36</sup> Such a state of being would preclude any form of inventiveness. “Foucault dreamed of a politics subject neither to the Sovereign, nor to the law, nor to the State. Negatively, we can see what he hoped to encourage. Aesthetically, we can also see what that might mean in terms of the mastery of the self, a certain kind of dandyism, and the ethical care of the self. All things which, perhaps, he achieved on a personal level. What is also clear is that Foucault believed too much in liberty, philosophy and ethics to proceed to an analysis of the divided, subjectivated, self-manipulating personality of our times. He was more interested in rebels than in conformists, and more interested in individual rebels than in rebellion.”<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

In the preceding argument, I have attempted to demonstrate the intertwining of effects of subjectivation with practices of freedom, and from there to advance a case for the open-ended, indeterminate—what I call “singularizing”—effect of subjectivation. Subjectivation, I have argued, as a singularizing, and indeterminate process, must be grasped in relation to the specific modes of freedom through which it is deployed. A consequence of this approach, touched on but not developed in this

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<sup>34</sup> Foucault, Michel. “L’éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté.” In *Dits et Écrits, 1954-1988, tome IV*, Paris, Gallimard: 1994, 718.

<sup>35</sup> Michaud, Yves. “Des modes de subjectivation aux techniques de soi : Foucault et les identités de notre temps” *Cités 2* (2000) Presses universitaires de France, 2000, 11.

<sup>36</sup> Foucault, Michel. “Qu’est-ce que les Lumières?” In *Dits et Écrits, 1954-1988, tome IV, 1980-1988*. Paris: Gallimard, 1994, 571; “What is Enlightenment?” In Rabinow, Paul, *The Foucault Reader*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1984, 32-50

<sup>37</sup> Michaud, Yves. “Des modes de subjectivation aux techniques de soi : Foucault et les identités de notre temps” *Cités 2* (2000) Presses universitaires de France, 12.

discussion, is the specific relevance of the practice of freedom to the modes of subjectivation imposed under political forms of liberalism. In short, we must grasp liberalism as itself the effectuation of the internal rule “we always govern too much,” and, in this regard, as a fictive realization of singularity. Liberalism is fictive because it is always a balance between normative techniques and techniques of the self. Lastly, subjectivation can be considered as being at the heart of a fiction contained within the most traditional history of freedom(s) and of liberalism. Whatever the modalities implemented, the process of subjectivation, although uncertain, tends toward the free act. It is a hope which hangs on social practices and techniques which themselves engender fields of knowledge (*savoirs*) which not only cause new objects and concepts to emerge, but also create new forms of subject and subjects of knowledge (*connaissance*).<sup>38</sup> The construction of an individuality is, therefore, never determined beforehand, but always partially a matter of chance.

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<sup>38</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Dits et Écrits, 1954-1988, tome I, 1954-1969*, Paris: Gallimard, 1994, 695; *Dits & Écrits, 1954-1988, tome II, 1970-1975*, Paris: Gallimard, 1994, 538; *La vérité et les formes juridiques*, Cadernos, PUC, 16 (June 1974). Conference held at the Catholic Pontifical University of Rio de Janeiro.

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## **SECTION III:**

# **BIOPower AND THE LIFE OF BODIES**



# BIOPOLITICS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE PSYCHIATRIC SUBJECT

LEWIS KIRSHNER

We do not expect people to be deeply moved by what is not unusual. That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind; and perhaps our frame could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence.

—*Middlemarch*

In this “post-Foucauldian” paper exploring the biopolitics of contemporary psychiatry, I will argue that significant change in psychiatric practice over the past twenty-five years has obscured the dimension of personal suffering that is addressed by George Eliot’s narrator in this well-known passage from *Middlemarch*. Eliot’s narrator draws our attention to two frames: the human frame, a body whose emotional register can only take so much, and the epistemological frame, a system of thought that can account for but a small part of human experience. She suggests that the breadth of everyday ordinary suffering might actually kill us if we were able to hear it in its proper dimensions. At the same time, she seems to imply that if we dared to listen to the pains of ordinary life we might be moved to respond. Foucault’s historical analysis, on the other hand, shows that the response to madness as an expression of the unruly or tragic in human existence has been characterized typically by exclusion or confinement, in the service of prevailing ideologies and forces. G. Agamben’s studies of contemporary biopolitics offer a complementary perspective, especially on the close relationship between madness and conceptions of subjectivity. In the prevailing paradigm of modern psychiatry, a form of neurobiological reductionism seems to sever mental illness from the subjectivity of suffering. Madness has become instead the sign of a biological taint—a genetic or metabolic deficiency in the brain, rather than an expression of

an existential possibility present at the margins for every person. Its ancient connection to tragedy, in Eliot's terms, or to trauma, in contemporary language, is being replaced by a discourse on abnormal brain function, which carries important social consequences.

Although fairly well-known, the following statistics provide a context for my discussion. The United States has a higher prevalence and lower treatment rate of serious mental illness than most other developed countries, according to a study published in the policy journal *Health Affairs* (Bijl et al., 2003). The authors found that less than half of those in need are treated, and the treatment they receive is usually inadequate. Although a large proportion of citizens lack mental health insurance coverage (SAMSHA, 2005), only 18 percent of U.S. residents who actually sought care received adequate services; the lowest rate among wealthier nations.<sup>1</sup> At present, around 45 million people lack any health insurance at all, of whom four million are estimated to suffer from serious mental illness. Similar data can be found on the website of the National Association for the Mentally Ill. Between 1955 and 1994, the population of public mental hospitals in the United States declined by approximately 500,000 people (Torrey, 1996). Many of these patients became homeless or inmates through the criminal justice system. During this same period, the number of individuals incarcerated per 100,000 of the population rose from 300 to around 700 in the United States (Maguire and Pastore, 1997), the world's highest such rate (Human Rights Watch Project, 2003). Estimates of the prevalence of mental illness among prisoners range from 6 to 15 percent, making it likely that more severely ill patients reside in prisons than in all state and federal hospitals combined (Lamb and Weinberger, 1998).<sup>2</sup> Data from the Bureau of Justice (Ditton, 1999) indicate that 59 percent of the mentally ill in prisons and 40 percent in jails receive no mental health services. Similarly, about one-third of the homeless population of the United States, or over 200,000 persons, is estimated to suffer from schizophrenia or manic-depressive disorders.<sup>3</sup> These data, suggesting "a great dispersal" of the mentally ill, raise

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<sup>1</sup> Mental Health Benefits Common, but often Inadequate (report prepared for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), *Psychiatric News*, August 8, 2004, 23-42.

<sup>2</sup> See also James, D.J. and Glaze, L.E. (2006, September). Mental health problems of prison and jail inmates. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Also Human Rights Watch, [http://hrw.org/doc/?t=global\\_prisons](http://hrw.org/doc/?t=global_prisons).

<sup>3</sup> This statistic and many others can be found on the website of the National Association for the Mentally Ill (NAMI).

fundamental questions about the biopolitics of mental health.

In his 1979 lectures at the *Collège de France* on “The Birth of Biopolitics,” Michel Foucault linked the beginning of biopolitics to the rise of neo-liberalism, which he saw as an ideology that ultimately subjugates all aspects of the “social sphere” to the economic domain.<sup>4</sup> Through the ideological notion of self-care, he tried to show how behavioral and health norms became intertwined as part of the individual’s responsibility to society. Psychiatric diagnosis, in his analysis, is an instrument for imposing certain standards of performance upon the individual. Medical science has almost unchallenged authority in the contemporary world, continuously enlarging the domain in which “scientifically” validated conditions can become disorders requiring treatment—hence the ever greater number of new conditions like eating disorders, PTSD, and social phobia that previously were considered variations of normal life. According to a 2005 study (Kessler et al., 2005), about half of all Americans will meet the criteria for a DSM-IV, Axis I, major psychiatric disorder during their lives. Were less serious disorders included, it seems probable that almost everyone would qualify for one or more psychiatric diagnoses at some point. With the enormous progress in brain scanning technologies, researchers have not been slow to discover correlations of these official disorders with specific patterns and sites of central nervous system activity, in turn available as potential targets for psychopharmacologic intervention. This medicalization of ordinary life has two sides: on the one hand, it provides legitimacy for previously unrecognized forms of suffering;<sup>5</sup> but, on the other, it tends to recategorize intrinsic human social problems as manifestations of defective brain function.

Giorgio Agamben (1995) expanded upon Foucault’s conception by pointing to an erosion of the classic Greek distinction, set forth in Aristotle’s *Politics*, between *zoë*—“pure life” belonging to every living being—and *bios*—a meaningful or good human life realized in the polis. *Zoë* and *bios*, he suggested, have become blurred, as the sphere of private life, the home, has become increasingly incorporated into the political realm—now seen to exist to satisfy basic life needs, from which the state now derives legitimacy. Sovereign power in Agamben’s interpretation has become closely linked to the implementation of a biopolitics defining

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<sup>4</sup> The term was first employed in 1974 in relation to governmental control over biological functions in a population, but elaborated with an accent on subjective appropriation of norms in Foucault’s later work. See Andrieu, 2004.

policies that regulate private health practices of citizens. At the same time, the definition of categories of citizenship has become a complex matter of law, permitting states to define whose needs deserve to benefit from its biopolitics. The elaboration of these distinctions has given new sanction to an ancient category of unprotected human beings that Agamben calls “bare life”: those for whom inhumane treatment can be justified as a legal exception.

Hannah Arendt (1979: 299), writing on the status of the refugee, observed: “The concept of human rights based upon the assumed existence of a human being as such, broke down at the very moment when those who professed to believe in it were for the first time confronted with people who had indeed lost all other qualities and specific relationships—except that they were still human.” She underlined a paradox that might be extended to psychiatric patients, whose loss of rights, susceptibility to cruel treatments and experimentation, and degraded living conditions in mid-twentieth century institutions seem to fall into this same category of bare life. In truth, asserts Agamben (1996: 128), basic rights are attributed to man solely to the extent that he is “the immediate vanishing ground of the citizen.”

In a German treatise of 1920 on euthanasia, cited by Agamben (1996: 136-143), Binding and Hoche attempted to outline a new political category, “life unworthy of being lived.” They broached this in a metaphor comparing militarily and economically productive citizens with sick patients:

in imagining a battlefield littered with healthy young bodies or a mine catastrophe that has killed hundreds of industrious workers and, at the same time, picturing our institutes for the mentally impaired and the treatments they lavish on their patients, one cannot help being shaken by the sinister contrast between the sacrifice of the dearest human good and, on the other hand, the enormous care for existences that not only are devoid of value but even ought to be valued negatively.

In its historical context, this proto-Nazi position represents an extreme; yet a disparaging attitude toward expenditure of resources on mentally impaired patients seems to underlie current political debates. Declining care to the sickest members of the community has been one effect of the conservative backlash of the past two decades. More broadly, within the current biopolitical framework, the right to health is not regarded as an element of popular sovereignty. According to the neo-liberal vision that has increasingly informed American polity, protecting one’s health is a

personal obligation. As Foucault observed, techniques for care of the self derived from biosocial norms have become the responsibility of citizens. These norms derive from the advances of the scientific research establishment in its close relationship with economic interests. Research in psychiatry, for instance, is not just determined by problems in treating illness or supporting health but by marketing concerns of pharmaceutical companies looking for competitive drugs. The biomedicalization of madness, in Foucault's terms, represents a confluence of scientific, political, and economic interests. The policy of supporting the private sector in health care is one obvious feature, consistent with an ideology privileging economic considerations over public welfare (Navarro, 2002). It begins by reducing illness to a biological diathesis, and ends with the exclusion of mentally unworthy persons.

### **A Brief History of the Psychiatric Subject**

The phrase "systems of thought" was proposed by Michel Foucault as the focus for his course on psychiatric power at the *Collège de France*, 1973-74. In his earlier treatise on madness, Foucault had referred to "the great exclusion" of the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the insane were banished from the public space to be eventually housed in state institutions under an ever-expanding system of social control. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, religious reformists adopted a method of so-called moral treatment in which patients were placed in a more humane environment under medical control. Foucault observes that this set-up, based on a kind of bourgeois family model, had nothing to do with medicine as it was then evolving, in which a search for causes of illness dictated the treatment. The aspect of moral treatment that came to appeal to 20<sup>th</sup> century reformists, however, (Caplan, 1969) was its concern for reintegration of the disturbed patient into his community, as if to recapture a fellow soul at risk of being lost to madness. In this respect, psychiatric exclusion in a specialized institution was intended as a step toward a re-inclusion, an acknowledgement that disturbed patients are human beings like us.

In the United States, the moral treatment movement gave way to a more prison-like system in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in response to the waves of foreign, mainly Southern European immigrants (Caplan, 1969). Various eugenic and racist theories were prevalent, marking these new patient groups as exceptions in Agamben's sense, subject to extreme injustices, including forced experimentation, confinement without recourse, sterilization, exploitation, and life-threatening treatments (see Whitaker, 2002). The huge human warehouses of state hospitals were

often presented as alternative societies in which patients worked the fields and managed everyday institutional functions, but this façade often disguised deplorable conditions within. Already by the 1930s, a physician hired by the American Medical Association concluded, in anticipation of Foucault, that the primary purpose of these institutions was not medical but legal, to confine persons unwanted by society (Whitaker: 70).

The cultural changes of the 1960s ultimately swept away these large hospitals, perhaps in part because of the newly discovered drugs that controlled behavior; perhaps even more because of laws providing social security income to disabled patients and other incentives to house the newly discharged; and, finally, because of a genuinely reformist spirit. The anti-authoritarian animus of the period saw the state hospitals as psychiatric prisons and resented the near-absolute power of their medical administrators. The concept of mental illness itself came under attack, while the authority of physicians to hospitalize and treat involuntary patients—re-labeled as clients—was greatly restricted by the courts. Community boards began to oversee hospitals, and non-medical clinicians gained influence over their operation. Meanwhile, the passage of legislation authorizing community mental health centers promoted rapid release of patients and provision of services to enable them to function in society, a step seen by many as a humanistic revival of moral psychiatry (Caplan, 1969).

The community mental health movement met a tremendous popular need, but it declined for a number of reasons, of which the polarization of approaches exemplified by anti-psychiatry and the growing conservatism of American politics were significant. Perhaps in response to the very real limitations of the psychoanalytic-social model of treatment, psychiatrists turned to research science, which was discovering medications that promised to eliminate primitive practices of restraint, dangerous treatments like psychosurgery, and unhealthy hospital conditions. These medications, initially presented by their inventors in France as inhibiting brain function so as to render patients more docile and accessible, soon became incorrectly described as “anti-psychotic” drugs, although research did not suggest anything specific about them in relation to underlying disorders. The optimistic metaphor that medication could correct a chemical imbalance encouraged high hopes for speedy reintegration of patients into society and soon developed a life of its own (Valenstein, 1988). Meanwhile, pharmaceutical companies were active in creating a public impression of the specificity of their drugs to correct the so-called imbalances. As late as 1996, newspaper advertisements by drug

companies argued that “schizophrenia and psychosis can result when the brain has abnormal dopamine levels.” (Whitaker: 199).

Unfortunately, studies of neuroleptic drugs not only failed to confirm this erroneous assertion, but suggested a worsening of outcome under the high dosage regimens then employed in American hospitals—in part because of marketing campaigns by pharmaceutical companies. The World Health Organization conducted a number of investigations of outcomes of a standardized diagnosis of schizophrenia in both third world and developed countries and found that, without exception, patients in the underdeveloped countries had a better prognosis (Jablensky, 1992). A plausible explanation was that care in the third world involved more group and family participation and less medication. This strategy, in fact, was found to be successful in studies of model programs in the United States (Mosher, 1995). Although recent research has complicated this conclusion,<sup>6</sup> the poor outcomes of current treatment methods have been well-documented. In addition, over the past two decades psychiatric services in many health care plans began to be contracted out to for-profit corporations, an arrangement which has been cited as an important factor in limiting access to treatment. By now, chronically ill patients are fortunate to be able to have even a single brief monthly appointment with a psychiatrist to manage their medications, while coverage for “psychosocial” therapies has been reduced to bare-bones management by less trained personnel.

### **The New Psychiatric Subject**

My purpose in presenting this brief history is not to debate the benefits of a rational use of medications nor even the merits of “managed” care, but to underline the transformation of psychiatric treatment in America over the past 50 years from what seemed to be a reformist, humanistic concern for afflictions that potentially affect everyone to a system of almost exclusively psychopharmacologic management. The role of the psychiatrist has narrowed, not because we now understand the causes of schizophrenia or PTSD, which seem in all likelihood to be the product of multiple factors, but because of a shift in ideology. The current

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<sup>5</sup> The history of the inclusion of PTSD in the American Psychiatric Association’s official diagnostic manual is an excellent example of the politics of psychiatric practice. See Whitaker, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> See the website of the Schizophrenia Research Forum at [schizophreniaresearchforum.org](http://schizophreniaresearchforum.org).

implication that the fundamental issues in mental illness are ones of chemistry in the brain follows a series of developments in biopolitics that tend to consider human persons as essentially somatic entities.

This transformation of the psychiatric subject comes close to placing the mentally ill into the category of defective persons—even persons whose lives are not worth living. It reflects a system of thought in opposition to the traditional view of mental illness as a loss of reason, a process of inflamed emotions and imagination that represents an existential possibility for every human being. In its modern version, this position regards psychiatric disorders as the outcome of a complex interplay between biological propensity, individual psychology, and social environment, and, conversely, posits “normal health” as a fragile achievement, responding to a number of crucial variables. As an example of this polyfactorial view of illness, I need only mention the sociology of suicide, which needs to be addressed on many levels apart from the administration of an anti-depressant drug. From this perspective, the high proportion of mentally ill persons in the United States casts doubt upon the prevailing socioeconomic system. As many have observed, this system relies upon an ideology of individualism and self-actualization, which sees psychiatric disorders as either the effect of transient imbalances to be corrected by medications or as stigmata of major brain defects like other incurable neurological illnesses. What is omitted is a recognition that mental disorder, independent of its pathophysiology, has personal and social determinants, reflecting the difficulties inherent in sustaining a bios of meaningful human life.

Man’s fate, Freud said, grows out of his biological heritage, which pulls against the demands of the civilized ego. Unsatisfied hungers and desires, failures of early nurture, and the inevitability of solitude, pain, and loss well up from the basic sources of existence to destabilize or to break the most vulnerable. In this sense, mental illness is a reminder of the “real” of human life that lies beneath idealized visions of prevailing systems of thought. Here, I employ the analysis of the term “real” by Žižek (1992), who observed that the essence of modernism was its claim to detect the reality underlying social appearances. The emancipatory thrust of modernist thinking in Freud and Marx, for example, aimed to uncover the repressed and disavowed forces structuring the lives of the Western subject. In the post-modern era, however, this project has been confronted with the apprehension of an unknowable real, an ineradicable presence at every level of observation. Žižek speaks of a “stain” of the real on the socio-cultural fabric that cannot be removed by enlightened



understanding. This “real” signifies the biological basis for the vitality of bios, meaningful life, at the same time as its traumatic presence threatens to collapse it to zoë, “pure life,” the play of impersonal, desubjectifying forces. From this perspective, madness cannot be fully circumscribed by medical language as a disease entity but represents an effect of the real, of inherent biological pressures on symbolic social existence.

Agamben redefines the gap between the symbolic and the real as the tension between language and speech, elaborating upon Benveniste’s distinction between the semantic and semiotic. Semantic refers to how personal meaning can be communicated by one subject to another, while semiotics describes a system of signs with fixed reference. Signs are recognized; meaning must be understood. “It is not language in general that marks out the human from other living beings,” says Agamben (51), but the split between sign systems and discourse.<sup>7</sup> Psychiatric patients are not simply semiotic creatures who exhibit signs of biological dysfunctions (in their symptoms for example), but also human subjects who attempt to communicate their own particular suffering. Biomedical reductionism tends to efface the person in favor of his illness, which is always in some sense unique to each subject. While accepting that the non-subjective “real” must have quantitative aspects, perhaps eventually to be read semiotically by medical science as Freud hoped, contemporary psychoanalysis has emphasized the conception of a subject who cannot be defined by objectifying technologies. Signs of illness may persist or vary systematically under different conditions, regardless of the individual case, but semantic discourse by its nature belongs to the person.

Lacan spoke of his register of the “real” as the presence of what is unassimilable to discourse, and this became his definition of trauma. When private experience fails to be symbolized, bios can collapse into zoë—that is, the play of the symbolic can give way to a return of impersonal forces, which produce the familiar symptoms of illness. From this perspective, psychosis cannot be totally circumscribed by medical language as a disease entity but represents a traumatic disruption of subjective experience. If mental illness could be identified wholly as a system of signs, like a flu infection, it could be read and treated by anyone knowing that semiotic language. It would be universal and recognizable in everyone who suffered from it, not specific to the person and requiring semantic understanding. On the other hand, to the extent that the

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<sup>7</sup> Animals, Benveniste proposed, are not in fact denied language; they are totally immersed in language (the animal world is composed of signs).

phenomenon of mental illness exceeds its semiotics, it undermines the biopolitical notion of a somatic self. There is then the paradox that psychiatric treatment always and only addresses problems in individual experience—i.e. feelings, language, and symbolic activity—which are to be corrected or changed by the medical intervention- while the current approach to the patient bypasses personal experience in favor of a relatively impersonal diagnostic process. The diagnostic interview, for example, which is the beginning of treatment, has become a mechanical gathering of isolated facts, perhaps augmented by administration of a scale or inventory, not the elicitation of subjective meanings.<sup>8</sup>

The contemporary status of the mentally ill is inseparable from the biopolitics of neo-liberal societies that have an interest in “naturalizing” or medicalizing the self. Replacing the suffering of persons with a discourse on damaged brains is an ideological phenomenon, a biopolitical reaction, perhaps an inability to tolerate the fluid nature of human subjectivity. In current health care politics, economic considerations seem increasingly to narrow the importance of human rights and social welfare. In this context, expenditure of resources on behalf of mentally ill persons may be seen as an unfair sacrifice imposed on the healthy. On one hand, the arguments of cost-effectiveness tend to restrict psychiatrists to exclusively pharmacologic treatment; on the other, many patients are excluded from any care at all by artificial distinctions about what constitutes illness, legal residence requirements, and moral-legal categories defining those who deserve public assistance. In the end, large numbers of persons seem to be assigned to Agemben’s category of “pure life,” “exceptions” to normality consigned to a gray zone of invisibility.

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<sup>8</sup> See the review *Psychiatries*, n° 147, *Penser l'évaluation—Universel et singulier*, for a discussion of this phenomenon

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# MICHEL FOUCAULT'S INFLUENCE ON THE THOUGHT OF GIORGIO AGAMBEN

JEFFREY BUSSOLINI

Giorgio Agamben's work is often situated within a Heideggerean lineage by interpreters and commentators.<sup>1</sup> While it is evident that Martin Heidegger's writings have been an important source for Agamben, as demonstrated for example by *Il linguaggio e la morte: Un seminario sul luogo della negatività* (1982), and *L'aperto: L'uomo e l'animale* (2002),<sup>2</sup> as well as a number of citations in other works, it is also becoming increasingly clear that his work is proceeding by an ongoing interpretation, engagement, and criticism of the work of Michel Foucault. At least since 1995's *Homo Sacer*, Agamben has used key concepts from Foucault and interpreted important passages from, for instance, *La volonté de savoir: Histoire de la sexualité I*; the late 1970s Collège de France lecture courses including *Sécurité, territoire, population*; *L'Archéologie du savoir*; *Les Mots et les choses*; *Surveiller et Punir*; and several parts of the *Dits et écrits*. With Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt, Foucault is a touchstone for the recent works of Agamben. As such, it seems both that Agamben offers philosophically intimate and critical commentary on Foucault at a time when the recently-released and latest works of Foucault (and consequently the foucauldian corpus) can benefit from such treatment, and that Agamben's own work should, in some important respects, be read and thought through Foucault's. In addition, by demonstrating such an indebtedness to Foucault, through borrowing key concepts and terms, the

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<sup>1</sup> For instance in her recent address at the International Association for Philosophy and Literature conference in Melbourne, Australia, at Capitol Theatre, RMIT, Rosi Braidotti situated Agamben as part of a Heideggerean school or lineage in terms of philosophy of the present and relation to nihilism and temporality.

<sup>2</sup> In English as *Language and Death: Lectures on the Place of Negativity*, trans. Karen E. Pinkus with Michael Hardt, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2006; *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell, Palo Alto, Stanford University Press, 2004.

Italian philosopher's own work is an important productive dialogue with that of the French thinker of the History of Systems of Thought.

In this paper I will analyze briefly three important dimensions of the philosophical rapport between Foucault and Agamben, three areas where their works are mutually strengthening, where important differences are established, or where similar interpretive strategies seem to be at stake. First, Agamben's use of the concept 'biopolitics' (*la biopolitica, la biopolitique*) and his analysis of the camp. Second, Agamben's analysis of the term 'dispositive' (*il dispositivo, le dispositif, 'apparatus'*) and its philosophical import. Third, Agamben's 'theological genealogy of economy and governmentality' as a foucauldian project. For reasons of space, in this paper I will leave aside Agamben's extensive considerations of Foucault in his methodological text *Signatura rerum: sul metodo* (which may in some respects be compared to Foucault's *L'Archéologie du savoir*).<sup>3</sup>

## Biopolitics and the camp

Agamben's explicit borrowing and development of the concept of biopolitics from Foucault is a primary, perhaps the most important, aspect of the relation between their thoughts. Agamben explicitly sets his project on or alongside Foucault's, yet also provisionally critiques aspects of the foucauldian formulation that he finds mistaken or limited. In the 'Introduction' of *Homo sacer: il potere sovrano e la nuda vita*, on the third page, Agamben draws upon Foucault's formulation of biopolitics in the reformulation of Aristotle's description of human politics:

It is in reference to this definition that Foucault, in the conclusion to *La volonté de savoir*, re-engages the process through which, at the threshold of the modern age, natural life started, instead, to be included in the mechanisms and the calculations of state power and politics is transformed into *biopolitics*. (Agamben 3, p. 5)<sup>4</sup>

Here Agamben makes reference to the crucial part V of *Histoire de la*

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<sup>3</sup> Considerations on *Signatura rerum* and Foucault's method constitute a separate paper to be submitted to *Foucault Studies*.

<sup>4</sup> "È in riferimento a questa definizione che Foucault, alla fine della *Volontà di sapere*, riassume il processo attraverso il quale, alle soglie dell'età moderna, la vita naturale comincia, invece, a essere inclusa nei meccanismi e nei calcoli del potere statale e la politica si trasforma in biopolitica."

*sexualité I*, "Droit de mort et pouvoir sur la vie/Right of death and power over life," and the passage where Foucault argues that "for millennia, the human remained what it was for Aristotle: a living animal also capable of a political existence; the modern human is an animal whose politics question its life as living being" (Foucault 8, p. 188).<sup>5</sup>

Agamben makes this an important element of his own project in *Homo sacer*, where questions of the politicization of life and of power over death are also prominent. He proposes that the ground identified by Foucault is the only one appropriate for the consideration of some of the more vexing problems of modern life: "The 'enigmas' that our century has set to historical reason and which continue to remain pressing (nazism is only the most disquieting among them) can be dissolved only on that ground--biopolitics--on which they were set" (Agamben 3, p. 7).<sup>6</sup> He also adds that only a biopolitical horizon can permit the posing of key modern political questions. And, as he says that death prevented Foucault from developing the implications of the biopolitics concept, Agamben seems to have taken on the task carefully of extending it. He identifies Arendt, Foucault, and Benjamin as key sources for this undertaking, though he also has provisional critiques of certain aspects of the work of each.

While he lauds the deeply biopolitical dimension of *The Human Condition* and the analyses of totalitarian power, Agamben thinks that Arendt passed up a more fundamental biopolitical analysis by not combining these together. His main criticism of Foucault is not to have extended his biopolitical analysis to the exemplary instance of biopolitical institution and practice: the concentration camp. Raised in the Introduction and in Part Three on the Camp in *Homo sacer*, he says that "Foucault never shifted his inquiry to those places of modern biopolitics *par excellence*: the concentration camp and the structure of the great totalitarian states of the twentieth century" (Agamben 3, 6).<sup>7</sup> Agamben's point is a strong one.

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<sup>5</sup> "L'homme, pendant des millénaires, est resté ce qu'il était pour Aristote: un animal vivant et de plus capable d'une existence politique; l'homme moderne est un animal dans la politique duquel sa vie d'être vivant est en question."

<sup>6</sup> "Gli <<enigmi>> (Furet, L'Allemagne nazi p. 7) che il nostro secolo ha proposto alla ragione storica e che continuano a restare attuali (il nazismo è solo il più inquietante fra essi) potranno essere sciolti solo sul terreno--la biopolitica--sul quale sono stati annodati."

<sup>7</sup> "Foucault non abbia mai spostato la sua indagine sui luoghi per eccellenza della biopolitica moderna: il campo di concentramento e la struttura dei grandi stati totalitari del novecento."

Concentration camps and fascism do seem to be a clear instance of the kind of power and politics that Foucault seeks to analyze.<sup>8</sup> It is possible that as an 'historian of the present' Foucault saw his analyses contributing precisely to an analysis of totalitarianism in the twentieth century--certainly several different aspects of the issue engaged his thought in a number of interviews and discussions. The publication of Foucault's lecture courses from 1976-79, sources that Agamben has subsequently drawn on, brings out more sustained analysis of the Nazi state, biopower, and genocide.<sup>9</sup>

Agamben's interpretation of Foucault's work on biopolitics and its extension is important; it is interesting that in his studies of the concentration camp and of the camp as modern paradigm more generally, Agamben seems to overlook Foucault's brief but important thoughts on the camp which were undoubtedly influential for him, even where these thoughts closely parallel those of Arendt which he cites.<sup>10</sup> These considerations are valuable not only for Agamben's studies of the concentration camp, but also for understanding the camp as a military figure that conditions and threatens modern democratic society. Foucault's brief analysis of the military camp in the 'hierarchical observation' subsection of the chapter on 'The means of correct training' in *Discipline and Punish* is certainly in line with Agamben's thought:

The camp is the diagram of a power that acts by means of general visibility. For a long time this model of the camp or at least its underlying principle was found in urban developments, in the construction of working-class housing estates, hospitals, asylums, prisons, schools: the spatial 'nesting' of hierarchized surveillance. The principle was one of 'embedding' (*encastrement*). The camp was to the rather shameful art of surveillance what the dark room was to the great science of optics.

A whole problematic then develops: that of an architecture that is no longer built simply to be seen...or to observe the external space...but to

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<sup>8</sup> Just as the study of disability may seem to be lacking alongside Foucault's inquiries into madness, clinical medicine, policing, institutions, prisons, and the like.

<sup>9</sup> These are *Il faut défendre la société; Sécurité, territoire, population*; and *La naissance de la biopolitique*. The third has not been cited explicitly by Agamben to my knowledge, but seems relevant to his thought.

<sup>10</sup> Although it may well be that the affinity between their thoughts is such that Agamben would reasonably believe that readers would automatically make this connection, as they would over biopolitics even if he didn't call on Foucault directly.



permit an internal, articulated and detailed control--to render visible those who are inside it; in more general terms, an architecture that would operate to transform individuals: to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them. (Foucault 2, pp. 171-2)<sup>11</sup>

This description by Foucault could be of the exercise of power in the concentration camps. Certainly, it contributes to the analysis of architecture, layout, and practices utilized in the camps, as well as to that of the underlying politics: isolating, making visible, exerting detailed control, altering. It is relevant to note that in his section on the camp paradigm Agamben quotes Arendt along very similar lines as Foucault. She also describes the camp as a means for domination and for altering human bodies and conditions:

Totalitarianism has for its utmost aim the total domination of the human. The concentration camps are laboratories for experimentation in total domination, because, human nature being what it is, this objective could not be achieved except in the extreme conditions of a human-built hell. (In Agamben 3, p. 132)<sup>12</sup>

Arendt also describes the camp, and totalitarian society more broadly, as a built space devoted to the aims of domination, visibility, alteration, and control. Foucault thought that this ideal of total visibility in the camp, key to the control that it was supposed to exercise, was originally an ideal of the military camp, where he said that this control-through-visibility was crucial due to the fact that the camp was made up of armed men. A group of soldiers with military arms represented a threat as a group--an assembled force that could threaten civilians or the government--as well as in the number of small altercations and disagreements that could break out among such men. That the social and political organization of the camp always sat uneasily with the aspirations of democratic society, even as the military camp seemed to be its twin, was also observed by Foucault, in the 'Docile bodies' chapter ('The art of distributions' subsection):

One should not forget that, generally speaking, the Roman model, at the

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<sup>11</sup> Recall Marx's important consideration of the dark room (*camera obscura*).

<sup>12</sup> Cited by Agamben from Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954*, New York, 1994, p. 240. "Il totalitarismo ha per scopo ultimo la dominazione totale dell'uomo. I campi di concentramento sono laboratori per la sperimentazione del dominio totale, perché, la natura umana essendo quello che è, questo obiettivo non può essere raggiunto che nelle condizioni estreme di un inferno costruito dall'uomo."

Enlightenment, played a dual role: in its republican aspect, it was the very embodiment of liberty; in its military aspect, it was the ideal schema of discipline. The Rome of the eighteenth century and of the Revolution was the Rome of the Senate, but it was also that of the legion; it was the Rome of the Forum, but it was also that of the camps. (Foucault 2, p. 146)

This consideration of the military model and lineage of the camp as model for politics becomes even more important as Agamben expands his scope in *Stato di eccezione, homo sacer II, 1*; and *Il Regno e la Gloria, homo sacer II, 2*.

### *Dispositif/Dispositivo/Apparatus*

In addition to making use of crucial concepts in Foucault, Agamben has also written philosophical and etymological analyses of them. Two so treated are *positivité* and *dispositif*, important concepts of Foucault's which he did not, nonetheless, fully define or situate within a philosophical lineage.<sup>13</sup> As with 'biopolitics,' it seems that Agamben has the double-task here of investigating elements of Foucault's analysis while also drawing on them to inform his own analyses of similar problems. Unlike 'biopolitics' which was coined by Foucault, however, Agamben notes that the term *positivité* is part of a Heglian tradition likely transmitted to Foucault during his studies (but to which Foucault adds his own imprimatur), and *dispositif* was a further refinement of that term by Foucault.

In *Che cos'è un dispositivo?* Agamben gives his account of the philosophical function, chronology, and history of the term *dispositif* in Foucault's thought:

The hypothesis that I mean to propose is that the word 'dispositive' (apparatus) may be a decisive technical term in Foucault's thought. He uses it frequently, above all starting in the middle of the 1970s, when he begins to occupy himself with what he called 'governmentality' or the 'government of humans.' (Agamben 2, 5-6)<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Near the end of this section I will propose that, for reasons illuminated by Agamben's analysis, the accepted English translation of *dispositif* in Foucault's work, 'apparatus,' may be insufficient in that it leaves out one crucial dimension, the legal declarative one, of the concept (though it well conforms to two others).

<sup>14</sup> "L'ipotesi che intendo proporvi è che la parola 'dispositivo' sia un termine tecnico decisivo nella strategia del pensiero di Foucault. Egli lo usa spesso soprattutto a partire dalla metà degli anni Settanta, quando comincia a occuparsi di

He associates the term *dispositif* with a certain time (around *Surveiller et punir* and *La Volonté de savoir*, then into the 1976-79 lecture courses) and a certain set of concepts in Foucault's work. And, he calls it a decisive technical term in the *strategy* of Foucault's thought. However, Agamben also wishes to make clear that it "is not a matter of a particular term, which refers only to this or that technology of power" (Agamben 2, 12).<sup>15</sup> Rather, Agamben takes this as a more generalized or distributed concept.

Agamben says of Foucault that "even though he would never give a true and proper definition, he came close to something like a definition" (Agamben 2, 6).<sup>16</sup> This refers to a 1977 interview that Agamben cites from *Dits et Écrits* (the interview, in a slightly different version, is in English as 'The Confession of the Flesh,' in *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon). Here I follow Agamben's Italian rendering of the French, since he plays up certain notes in the translation and he composes this definition from two different responses given by Foucault in the interview, the ellipses are in Agamben's quotation:

What I'm seeking to characterize with this noun is, first of all, an absolutely heterogeneous assembly which involves discourses, institutions, architectural structures, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific enunciations, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions; in short: as much the said as the un-said, these are the elements of the dispositive (apparatus). The dispositive is the network which is arranged between these elements...

...with the term dispositive, I understand a type of--so to speak--formation which in a certain historical moment had as its essential function to respond to an emergency. The dispositive therefore has an eminently strategic function...

I said that the dispositive is by nature essentially strategic, which indicates that it deals with a certain manipulation of forces, of a rational and concerted intervention in the relations of force, to orient them in a certain direction, to block them, or to fix and utilize them. The dispositive is always inscribed in a game of power and, at the same time, always tied to the limits of knowledge, which derive from it and, in the same measure, condition it. The dispositive is precisely this: an ensemble (set) of strategies of relations of force which condition certain types of knowledge

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quello che chiamava la 'governamentalità' o il 'governo degli uomini.'"

<sup>15</sup> "Non si tratta di un termine particolare, che si riferisce soltanto a questa o quella tecnologia del potere."

<sup>16</sup> "(b)enché non ne dia mai una vera e propria definizione, egli si avvicina a qualcosa come una definizione."

and is conditioned by them. (Agamben 2, 194-96)<sup>17</sup>

Two key aspects of the passage are salient: the relational and network-type characteristics of the dispositive (apparatus), and the essential function of the dispositive in responding to an emergency. This *emergency* aspect of the dispositive, in addition to helping to understand the strategic function, makes it clear that this concept also has to do with what Agamben, drawing on François Saint-Bonnet and a long legal tradition, calls the state of exception. It would seem from the 1976-78 lecture courses (the time of this interview) that Foucault was occupied with just such questions, as we see for instance in his considerations on *raison d'État*, necessity as legal principle, and *coup d'État* as he sets out to describe a *dispositif de sécurité*.<sup>18</sup>

Agamben recapitulates three points of importance from Foucault's near-definition. First, he underscores that it is "a heterogeneous assembly which includes virtually any thing".<sup>19</sup> He emphasizes the relational and assembled aspect, "the dispositive in itself is the network (system) which is arranged between these elements".<sup>20</sup> Second, he points out that "the

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<sup>17</sup> Interview in *Power/Knowledge*, pp. 194-228. The elements of Foucault's definition cited by Agamben are on pages 194-196. "Ciò che io cerco di individuare con questo nome, è, innanzitutto, un insieme assolutamente eterogeneo che implica discorsi, istituzioni, strutture architettoniche, decisioni regolative, leggi, misure amministrative, enunciati scientifici, proposizioni filosofiche, morali e filantropiche, in breve: tanto del detto che del non-detto, ecco gli elementi del dispositivo. Il dispositivo è la rete che si stabilisce fra questi elementi...

...col termine dispositivo, intendo una specie--per così dire--di formazione che in un certo momento storico ha avuto come funzione essenziale di rispondere a un'urgenza. Il dispositivo ha dunque una funzione eminentemente strategica...

Ho detto che il dispositivo è di natura essenzialmente strategica, il che implica che si tratti di una certa manipolazione di rapporti di forza, di un intervento razionale e concertato nei rapporti di forza, sia per orientarli in una certa direzione, sia per bloccarli o per fissarli e utilizzarli. Il dispositivo è sempre iscritto in un gioco di potere e, insieme, sempre legato a dei limiti del sapere, che derivano da esso e, nella stessa misura, lo condizionano. Il dispositivo è appunto questo: un insieme di strategie di rapporti di forza che condizionano certi tipi di sapere e ne sono condizionati."

(Agamben's rendering in Italian of Dits et Écrits, vol. III, pp. 299-300)

<sup>18</sup> See my "Ongoing Founding Events in Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben," *Telos*, July 2009 for a section that furthers the considerations of this paragraph.

<sup>19</sup> This and the two other Agamben quotations in this paragraph from *Che cos'è un dispositivo*, p. 7. "un insieme eterogeneo, che include virtualmente qualsiasi cosa."

<sup>20</sup> "Il dispositivo in se stesso è la rete che stabilisce tra questi elementi"

dispositive always has a concrete strategic function and is always inscribed in a relation of power".<sup>21</sup> Third, he maintains that it "results from the crossing of relations of power and relations of knowledge".<sup>22</sup>

Next Agamben turns his attention to what he calls "a brief genealogy of this term first in the work of Foucault and then in a wider historical context" (Agamben 2, 8).<sup>23</sup> He believes that term *dispositif* evolved out of his earlier use of the term *positivité*, and that the former term is an important point of reference for the latter one. The terms *dispositif* and *positivité* are etymologically related: *positivité* is from Latin *ponere* (to set down, to place, to put), to which the prefix *dis-* (apart) is added to form the Latin *disponere* (to arrange, to dispose).

At the end of the 1960s, more or less at the time he was writing *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, in order to define the object of his research Foucault did not use the term dispositive (apparatus), but that etymologically close one *positivité*, positivity, this time too without defining it. (Agamben 2, 8)<sup>24</sup>

Agamben says that he had frequently asked himself where Foucault found this term, until re-reading Jean Hyppolite's essay *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire de Hegel: Raison et histoire, les idées de positivité et de destin*.<sup>25</sup> This reminded him of the key roles played by the concepts 'destiny' and, especially, 'positivity' in the thought of Hegel according to Hyppolite. Hyppolite was Foucault's teacher at the Lycée Henri IV and at École Normale Supérieure. Foucault took over Hyppolite's chair at the Collège de France following Hyppolite's death; Hyppolite titled his chair The History of Systems while Foucault dubbed his The History of Systems of Thought. Agamben observes that:

In particular, the term 'positivity' has its proper place in Hegel in the opposition between "natural religion" and "positive religion." While natural religion concerns the immediate and general relation of human

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<sup>21</sup> "Il dispositivo ha sempre una funzione strategica concreta e si iscriva sempre in una relazione di potere"

<sup>22</sup> "risulta dall'incrocio di relazione di potere e di relazioni di sapere"

<sup>23</sup> "Una sommaria genealogia di questa termine prima all'interno dell'opera di Foucault e poi in un contesto storico piu ampio."

<sup>24</sup> "Alla fine degli anni Sessanta, piu o meno al momento in cui scrive *L'archeologia del sapere*, per definire l'oggetto delle sue ricerche Foucault non usa il termine dispositivo ma quello, etimologicamente vicino, 'positivité', positività, anche questa volta senza definirlo."

<sup>25</sup> There does not seem to be a translation in English of this book.

reason with the divine, positive or historical religion includes the ensemble of beliefs, rules, and rites which, in a certain society and in a certain historical moment, are imposed on the individual from outside. (Agamben 2, 9)<sup>26</sup>

The 'positive' of positive religion for Hegel is that assembly of beliefs and practices which act to encode, formalize, and constrain the individual through relations of "command and obedience" (*di comando e di obbedienza*). It is in this respect that Agamben, and Hyppolite, identify Hegel's project as a liberatory one involving resistance: "In a certain sense, positivity was considered by Hegel as an obstacle to human liberty, and as such was condemned" (Agamben 2, 10-11).<sup>27</sup>

By taking up this term, which Agamben says "will later become 'dispositive,'" Foucault takes a position on a problem in Hegel which is also his own: "the relation between individuals as living beings and the historical element, meaning with this term the assembly of institutions, processes of subjectivation, and rules in which relations of power are concretized" ( Agamben 2, 11-12).<sup>28</sup> The major difference identified by Agamben is that Foucault does not share Hegel's goal of dialectically unifying positivity and natural religion, but chose to "emphasize the conflict between them"<sup>29</sup> and "to investigate the modes in which positivity (or dispositives) act in the relations, mechanisms, and 'games' of power" (Agamben 2, 12).<sup>30</sup>

Agamben also examines the definitions of the term *dispositif* in common usage in French. He identifies three separate and important dimensions. First, a juridical sense, "the part of the judgment which contains the

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<sup>26</sup> "In particolare, il termine 'positività' ha in Hegel il suo luogo proprio nell'opposizione fra "religione naturale" e "religione positiva". Mentre la religione naturale riguarda l'immediato e generale relazione della ragione umana col divino, la religione positiva o storico comprende l'insieme della credenze, delle regole e dei riti che in una certa società e in un certo momento storico sono imposti agli individui dall'esterno."

<sup>27</sup> "In un certo senso, la positività è considerata da Hegel come un ostacolo alla libertà umana, e come tale viene condannata"

<sup>28</sup> "la relazione fra gli individui come esseri viventi e l'elemento storico, intendendo con questo termine l'insieme delle istituzioni, dei processi di soggettivazione e delle regole in cui si concretizzano le relazioni di potere."

<sup>29</sup> "enfaticamente il conflitto fra di essi"

<sup>30</sup> "di investigare i modi in cui le positività (o i dispositivi) agiscono nelle relazioni, nei meccanismi e nei 'giochi' del potere."

decision separate from the opinion,"<sup>31</sup> that is, that which "decides and sets out" (*decide e dispone*)--the resonances here with theories of the state of exception (decisionism in Schmitt) and with Agamben's recent work on order in *Il Regno e la Gloria* are unmistakable. Second, there is a "technical signification: the way in which the pieces of a machine are arranged."<sup>32</sup> Third, a "military signification: the set of equipment arranged in compliance with a plan"<sup>33</sup> (Agamben 2, 13-14). Here lies the problem with the usual translation as 'apparatus' in English. While this English concept well captures the second and third meanings of the French term, it unfortunately entirely misses the crucial first aspect. In fact, it can actively be misleading since the term 'apparatus' applied to a legal decision would refer exactly to the parts (opinion and reasoning) that are excluded by the French (and Italian and Latin terms). Given Foucault's claim that it is meant to encompass laws, regulative decisions, administrative measures, etc., and given Agamben's careful tracing of this term in relation to *positivité*, it would seem that the aspect pertaining to deciding and setting out is crucial to the concept *dispositif*. It may be germane in this regard to use the English term 'dispositive' since it maintains the etymological tie to the Latinate terms, shows the linkage to 'positivity' (as that which is formally laid down or put in place), and deals with administration and control as well as power and arrangement.

### **οικονομία (oikonomia)/Dispositif/Gouvernementalité**

Agamben's 2007 *Il Regno e la Gloria: per una genealogia teologica dell'economia e del governo* is a book heavily indebted to Foucault, but which also makes attentive criticism of his work. Agamben clearly situates this book within a Foucauldian framework. He opens the book by saying that "this research proposes to investigate the modes and the reasons for which power came to take the form, in the West, of an *oikonomia*, that is of human government (government of humans)." He says that the work is "in the track of Michel Foucault's research on the genealogy of governmentality, but seeks, at the same time, to understand the internal reasons for which it did not arrive at a conclusion" (Agamben 5, 9).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> "la parte di un giudizio che contiene la decisione separamente dalle motivazioni"

<sup>32</sup> "significato tecnologico: il modo in cui sono disposti i pezzi di una macchina"

<sup>33</sup> "significato militare: l'insieme dei mezzi disposti in conformità di un piano"

<sup>34</sup> "Questa ricerca si propone di investigare i modi e le ragioni per cui il potere è andato assumendo in Occidente la forma di una *oikonomia*, cioè di un governo di uomini. Essa si situa pertanto nel solco delle ricerche di Michel Foucault sulla genealogia della governamentalità, ma cerca, insieme, di comprendere le ragioni

Agamben here addresses the same period and concepts in Foucault's work as in his considerations on the *dispositif*. He takes up Foucault's concept of the 'economy of power.' The 'economy' in this formulation is the crux for Agamben, and the project of his book is to explore the genealogy of economy in relation to power and government.

In this theological genealogy of the early centuries of the Christian church, which he indicates is well beyond the chronological limits of Foucault's own genealogies, Agamben says he wishes better to understand how "the double structure of the governmental machine which in *State of Exception* (2003) appeared in the correlation between *auctoritas e potestas*, here takes the form of the articulation between Kingdom and Government and, ultimately, comes to examine the same relation--which initially was not taken into account--between *oikonomia* and Glory, between power as effective government and management and power as ceremonial and liturgical sovereignty" (Agamben 5, 9-10).<sup>35</sup> Although it is largely concerned with ancient sources, Agamben does not intend this as a contained history of those times, but, in the Foucauldian tradition, as a "theoretical interrogation of the present projected on the past (*interrogazione teorica del presente proietta sul passato*)," and as such he points out that "the function of acclamations of Glory, in the form of modern public opinion and of consensus, is still at the center of the political dispositives of contemporary democracies" (Agamben 5, 9-10).<sup>36</sup> In addition to borrowing the concepts of biopolitics, governmentality, and dispositive, Agamben situates his own project in parallel to Foucault's as history of the present.

Some brief etymological considerations help to comprehend why *oikonomia* draws so much attention and emphasis from Agamben, and why he would want to devote an entire book to it. In Greek οἰκονομία (*oikonomia*) derives from οἶκος (*oikos*), 'house, household, dwelling

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interne per cui queste non sono giunti a compimento."

<sup>35</sup> "La doppia struttura della macchina governamentale, che in *Stato di eccezione* (2003) era apparsa nella correlazione fra *auctoritas e potestas*, prende qui la forma dell'articolazione fra Regno e Governo e, in ultimo, giunge a interrogare la stessa relazione--che all'inizio non era stata messa in conto--fra *oikonomia* e Gloria, fra il potere come governo e gestione efficace e il potere come regalità cerimoniale e liturgica."

<sup>36</sup> "La funzione delle acclamazioni e della Gloria, nella forma moderna dell'opinione pubblica e del consenso, è tuttora al centro dei dispositivi politici delle democrazie contemporanee."



place, household goods, reigning house,' and means 'the disposition of home furnishings, management of the household, arrangement, stewardship, operation, scheming' and 'government (of a state) or the public revenue of a state.' Crucial for him is that *dispositio* (from which *dispositivo*, *dispositif*, and 'dispositive' derive) is the Latin translation of *oikonomia*. As such he maintains that "the Latin term *dispositio*, from which our term 'dispositive' derives, comes to take on all the complex semantic sphere of the theological *oikonomia*" (Agamben 2, 18).<sup>37</sup> This concept is important for the way that it separates yet coordinates in god being and acting, nature and the techniques of government. Following on this genealogical exposition, Agamben relates Foucault's *dispositif* not only to the young Hegel and 'positivity,' but also to the *Gestell* (enframing) of the late Heidegger (Agamben 2, 19).

In carrying out his theological genealogy Agamben looks carefully at the 1977-78 lecture course *Sécurité, territoire, population*, both to draw important dimensions from it and to criticize what he sees as shortcomings. He notes that Foucault begins the course by distinguishing three different modalities in the history of the relations of power: the legal system, disciplinary mechanisms, and dispositives of security. He is at pains to point out, however, that "Foucault takes care to specify that these three modalities do not succeed one another chronologically or exclude one another, but coexist and articulate with one another in such a way, however, that one of them constitutes from time to time the dominant political technology" (Agamben 5, 125).<sup>38</sup> This is an important observation given that much hasty scholarship of Foucault, too eager to periodize and to introduce irrevocable 'turns' in his thought, has produced a great deal of confusion over these supposedly distinct concepts in his work. The modalities of power he describes interpenetrate and coexist, perhaps like the heterogeneous network of the *dispositif* as interpreted by Agamben.

Among a number of citations in *Il Regno e la Gloria* there is one passage in particular from *Sécurité, territoire, population* that Agamben draws on at length and with special importance for this project. This is in the lecture

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<sup>37</sup> "Il termine latino *dispositio*, da cui deriva il nostro termine 'dispositive', viene dunque ad assumere su di sé tutta la complessa sfera semantica dell'*oikonomia* teologica."

<sup>38</sup> "Foucault ha cura di precisare che queste tre modalità non si succedono cronologicamente né si escludono a vicenda, ma convivono e si articolano l'una con l'altra, in modo, però, che una di esse costituisce di volta in volta tecnologia politica dominante."

from 25 January 1978, where Foucault writes:

As I was talking about the population, there was a word which came back up ceaselessly ... the word 'government.' The more that I talked of the population, the more I stopped saying 'sovereign.' I was led to designate or to aim at something which, there again I believe, is relatively new, not in the word, not in a certain level of reality, but inasmuch as new technology. Or rather, the privilege which the government started to exercise in relation to rules, to the point that one day we could say, to limit the power of the king: "the king rules but he does not govern," this inversion of government in relation to rule and the fact that government would be at heart much more than sovereignty, much more than rule, much more than the *imperium*--the modern political problem, I believe that it is absolutely tied to the population. The series: mechanisms of security-population-government and the opening of the field that we call politics, all this, I believe, constitutes a series that must be analyzed. (Foucault 7, p. 77-8)<sup>39</sup>

The importance of this passage for Agamben's project can be seen at once. Beyond the similarities of object of analysis and of method, it is important to point out that the term that I have translated as 'rule' here (Foucault uses *règne*) is the same as the Italian term *Regno* in Agamben's text; 'government' (*gouvernement*) is his *governo* (and *oikonomia* via the economy of power, of administration). Note that while Foucault points out that other forms of power join and multiply sovereignty, sovereignty itself is not entirely supplanted or displaced altogether. Government is *more* than sovereignty and than rule, but he does not characterize it as something which is swept away (nor would Agamben); after all the king still rules, even if the meaning of that ruling has changed.

To follow up on the long passage from *Sécurité, territoire, population*,

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<sup>39</sup> Cited in Agamben 5, pp. 125-6. "À mesure que j'ai parlé de la population, il y avait un mot qui revenait sans cesse...c'est le mot de 'gouvernement.' Plus je parlais de la population, plus je cessais de dire 'souverain.' J'étais amené à designer ou à viser quelque chose qui, là encore je crois, est relativement nouveau, non pas dans le mot, non pas à un certain niveau de la réalité, mais en tant que technique nouvelle. Ou plutôt, le privilège que le gouvernement commence à exercer par rapport aux règles, au point qu'un jour on pourra dire, pour limiter le pouvoir du roi: 'le roi règne mais il ne gouverne pas,' cette inversion du gouvernement par rapport à règne et le fait que le gouvernement soit au fond beaucoup plus que la souveraineté, beaucoup plus que la règne, beaucoup plus que l'imperium, le problème politique moderne, je crois que c'est lié absolument à la population. La série: mécanismes de sécurité-population-gouvernement et ouverture du champ de ce qu'on appelle la politique, tout ceci, je crois, constitue une série qu'il faudrait analyser."

Agamben draws on two brief quotations from the 1 February 1978 lecture to specify his point. Both are meant to illustrate his thinking on economies of power and their role in politics. The first is a sentence where Foucault commented that "the introduction of economy into political practice...will be the essential issue of government"; in the second, related, quotation, Foucault speaks of "the art of exercising power in the form of economy" (Foucault 7, 98-9).<sup>40</sup> Both of these indicate the importance of the economic model of power for Foucault and the following up of this concept in Agamben.

While drawing heavily from Foucault's conceptual frameworks and analyses to ground his own, Agamben also does make one pointed challenge about *Sécurité, territoire, population*, and about Foucault's investigations of pastoral power. This concerns the scope of Foucault's investigations, and the theological genealogy which Agamben has set out to write:

Although Foucault, for his 'economic' definition of the pastorate, rightly cites Gregory of Nazianze (Foucault 7, p. 196)--an author who, as we have seen, plays an important role in the elaboration of the trinitarian economy--he seems altogether to miss the theological implications of the term *oikonomia*, to which this research is dedicated. But that the foucauldian genealogy of governmentality can be, in this perspective, followed and pushed back to the point of identifying, even in god, through the elaboration of the trinitarian paradigm, the origin of the notion of an economic government of humans and of the world, does not take value from his hypotheses, but rather confirms the theoretical nucleus to the degree that it describes in detail and corrects the historical-chronological exposition. (Agamben 5, p. 126-7)<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Cited in Agamben 5, p. 126. "L'introduction de l'économie à l'intérieur de l'exercice politique...sera l'enjeu essentiel du gouvernement"; "l'art d'exercer le pouvoir dans la forme de l'économie."

<sup>41</sup> "Benché Foucault, per la sua definizione <<economica>> del pastorato, citi proprio Gregorio di Naziano (Foucault 7, p. 196)--un autore che, come abbiamo visto, svolge un ruolo importante nell'elaborazione dell'economia trinitaria--egli sembra ignorare del tutto le implicazioni teologiche del termine *oikonomia*, cui è dedicata la presenta ricerca. Ma che la genealogia foucauldiana della governamentalità possa essere, in questa prospettiva, proseguita e arretrata fino a identificare in Dio stesso, attraverso l'elaborazione del paradigma trinitario, l'origine della nozione di un governo economico degli uomini e del mondo, ciò non toglie valore alle sue ipotesi, ma ne conferma piuttosto il nucleo teorico nella misura stessa in cui ne circonda e corregge l'esposizione storico-cronologico."

Since Agamben has identified the trinitarian economy as the site where the particular assembly of practices of governance, administration, and control first took place (and was first articulated and codified through a complex structure with the coexisting rule by one god), he argues that it has a special, if unacknowledged, place in this foucauldian formulation of power. This claim is all the stronger since Foucault is at pains to describe and elucidate the pastoral model of power, and since he uses terms like *économie* and *dispositif*, which have a clear etymological and conceptual relation to *oikonomia*.

Foucault himself was certainly cognizant of some of these implications, as he has his own discussions of *oikonomia*, and even comments that in some ways the French *économie* is a poor translation for the idea, *oikonomia psuchôn* (οἰκονομία ψυχῶν), that he is trying to get at. He says that the Latin translation *regimen animarum* (regime of souls (or of life)) may be better translated by the French *conduite*, which maintains the connotations of guidance, arrangement, management, and control (and is both the direction/guidance and the *manner* in which one is guided). Clearly this is relevant to his discussion of conduct and counter-conduct, and he tributes Gregory of Nazianze with first focusing on this issue of 'conduct' in the *oikonomia psuchôn*.

Agamben presents this concept and genealogy of pastoral power as one of the most promising and most problematic aspects of the foucauldian corpus. Many readers may have felt unsettled, as this one and Agamben did, after reading the meticulous descriptions of pastoral power, that Foucault seems to fail to justify the time frame of its entrance into political power, and some aspects of its development. Agamben calls Foucault's dating of pastoral power as a political force wrong, and more accurately to be understood within the frame he proposes:

The passage from the ecclesiastical pastorate to political government, which Foucault seeks to explain, to tell the truth in a manner none too convincing, through the rise of a whole series of counter-conducts which resist the pastorate, is much more comprehensible if it is seen as a secularization of this minute phenomenology of first and second, proximate and remote, occasional and efficient causes, of general and particular will, mediate and immediate concurrence, *ordinatio* and *executio*, through which the theorists of providence have sought to make intelligible the divine government of the world. (Agamben 5, p. 128)<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> "E il passaggio dal pastorato ecclesiastico al governo politico, che Foucault cerca

Agamben, who also criticizes Foucault for the absence of any reference to 'providence' in the 1977-78 lecture course, despite the crucial citations of Gregory of Nazianze, here explains precisely the promise and the limitations of Foucault's genealogy and the importance of his own work, both as original historical research and as philosophical interpretation. Since in other respects Foucault gives a convincing account of the development of the economy of power he calls pastoral in the early centuries of the church, it is somewhat at odds for him to claim that this came to be a political phenomenon only in the 16th and 17th centuries (*Securité, territoire, population*, 8 March 1978 lecture). While his thoughts on the relations of these powers to the newly-emerging State governments of the time is certainly germane and interesting, is it not the case that the pastoral power of the church had been used in guidance, management, and control for centuries before that, and that the power of the church (including especially this pastoral power) had been coextensive with the State power (or sovereign power) well prior to the neo-classical age that he specifies? Given his careful attention to the same sources and concepts used by Foucault, Agamben makes a convincing case that this area of his own research is a vital extension of the foucauldian corpus--as he said he wished both to use Foucault's genealogy and to understand the internal reasons for its not having come to conclusion in the texts and periods he considers. It should be said that Agamben makes no mention of *Les aveux de la chair*, the intended fourth volume of *Histoire de la sexualité*, which bears on the early Christian period and may take into account some of the texts and concepts taken up by Agamben--I have not read that manuscript so cannot make an authoritative determination, but it seems certain that aspects of it will play a role in future considerations on the philosophical relations between Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault.

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di spiegare, a dire il vero in modo non troppo convincente, attraverso il sorgere di tutta una serie di contracondotte che resistano al pastorato, è assai più comprensibile se lo si vede come una secolarizzazione di quella minuziosa fenomenologia di cause prime e seconde, prossime e remote, occasionali ed efficienti, volontà generali e volontà particolari, concorsi mediati e immediati, ordinatio ed executio, attraverso i quali i teorici della provvidenza avevano cercato di rendere intelligibile il governo divino del mondo."

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# BIOPOWER - A SLIP OF THE POLEMICAL MIND

MACHIEL KARSKENS

## **Biopower - A Slip of the Polemical Mind**

The full edition of Foucault's lectures on the mechanisms of power which were delivered at the *Collège de France* in 1976, 1978 and 1979 has been available since November 2004.<sup>1</sup> In the 1976 lectures Foucault put biopower on the stage while at the same time introducing the idea that politics was the continuation of war by other means. After 1976, however, both biopower and power as war had quit the scene, and at the beginning of the 1978 Course, the theme of biopower was openly dropped. Why was this? The present contribution attempts to answer this question in two ways: First, through a documentation and reconstruction of the appearance of biopower in Foucault's works, and later, through a reflection on Foucault's use of a "war model" of power, and his later denials of this model. The link connecting biopower and the war model of power, it will be shown, is the sovereign power of life and death. However, the conceptual mistake or slip of the mind made here is that this negative power can be reversed into a positive power over life. Upon closer examination of the war model such a reversal proves to be impossible. The concluding section of this article provides an epilogue offering an alternative reading of biopower. It is suggested that the idea of the normal and its *inclusive* opposition to the pathological may have been a leitmotiv in Foucault's theories of positive power; biopower, then, represents a form of medical normalization.

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<sup>1</sup>All Foucault references are chronological and to primary sources. I refer to the lectures at the *Collège de France* as Cours with a single date, since most lectures were in fact delivered between January and April of the given year. In 1977 Foucault was on sabbatical and did not lecture at the *Collège de France*.

## Prelude: chronology of biopower

The first time Michel Foucault used the phrases “biopower” and “biopolitics” was in his October/November 1974 lectures in Brazil on medicine and social health care. At the beginning of the second lecture, summarizing the lecture immediately preceding, Foucault suggested a reversal of the theory that capitalism has transformed medicine from a collective into a private practice of health care. On the contrary, he said, late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century capitalism socialized the body as its first object, transforming it into a uniquely productive labour force. Society not only controlled the ideology or the minds of individuals, it also controlled their bodies. Thus, in capitalist society, “The body is a biopolitical reality; medicine is a biopolitical strategy.”<sup>2</sup> In the first lecture he already mentioned a similar compound using “bio”, viz. “biohistory” (Foucault, 1974a: 159). These were the only times the two terms were used in those lectures. Nor could I find any similar compounds involving “bio” in the 1974 and 1975 *Cours* or in *Surveiller et punir*, which was written during the summer of 1974 (Defert, 1993: 45).

It was not until the final lecture of the 1976 *Cours* that the notion of biopower was explicitly discussed and explained as a specific mechanism of modern power. The discussion was repeated in the first section of the fifth chapter of *La volonté de savoir*, which was written in the summer of 1976 and published in December of the same year. Both texts follow the same train of thought; the wordings are often similar or even, sometimes, identical. It should be noted that the summary of the 1976 *Cours* does not mention biopower at all. The first appearance of “biopolitics” in combination with “biohistory” in French print<sup>3</sup> was in *Le Monde* of 17 October 1976 in the heading of a short review by Foucault of Jean Ruffié’s book, *De la biologie à la culture*, on evolutionary biology and racism (Foucault, 1976a). Foucault focused his review on Ruffié’s refutation of racism and on the polymorphous notion of “population” in genetics and

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<sup>2</sup> Original Spanish text: “El cuerpo es una realidad bio-política. La medicina es una estrategia bio-política” (Foucault, 1974b: 91).

<sup>3</sup> I have not found any entry or reference to biopouvoir in French dictionaries (Robert, Larousse, Trésor). Biopolitique is mentioned once under “bio” by the *Trésor de la langue française* (4th volume, Paris: CRNS, 1975: 522) in a citation from *Petite encyclopédie politique* (Paris: Seuil, 1969): “biopolitique est une discipline en voie de formation dont la place sera bientôt largement reconnue ... [son but est] de reconcilier la société moderne avec ce qui doit rester son rapport organique.” The second edition of the Robert (2001) copies this reference.



statistics. Biohistory and biopolitics were introduced in the final paragraph as counter-notions summarizing the polymorphous or statistical conception of population as opposed to the unitary concepts used in history and politics, such as “the human species” or “race”.<sup>4</sup> In a lecture in November 1976, again in Brazil, biopower was discussed as another family of power technologies next to the family of disciplinary technologies (Foucault, 1976b). In 1977 biopower or biopolitics was not mentioned at all. January 1978 Foucault’s first lecture immediately began by introducing biopower in a disparaging remark, “This year I would like to begin to study something which I have called casually, somewhat randomly, biopower” (Cours 1978: 3, my translation). After a short and rather concise explanation (see next section), Foucault never used “biopower” or “biopolitics” again in his lectures.<sup>5</sup> Although the 1979 Cours was called “The Birth of Biopolitics” it did not even mention biopower, while mentioning biopolitics only occasionally. In Foucault’s later writings and words, biopower or biopolitics ceased to play any role. This is evidence, in my opinion, that biopower has occupied only a minor place in Foucault’s theories of power, and that it was only a topic of his analytic of power during a highly limited period of time, i.e. the years 1975 and 1976.

### **Biopower: power over life or transformed killing power**

Foucault openly discussed and explained biopower in the final lecture of the Cours of 1976 and in the first section of chapter V of *La volonté de savoir* (henceforth called VS). Although he described all the characteristics of biopower in the previous chapter of the book (IV-2), he refrained from using the term biopower. The following is a reconstructive presentation and a short comment on both texts combined.

Shortly after the introduction of disciplinary power, according to Foucault, states also developed new power technologies in order to get a power/knowledge grip on life as a problem of man *as* living being or human species (also called population). Foucault does not explain what “life” means, although he always gives the same examples, including endemic health and illness of the population, famine, the living and

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<sup>4</sup> In Ruffié’s book, “biopolitics”, “biopower” or similar terms are not used at all; as far as Ruffié discusses phenomena that could be connected with Foucault’s idea of biopower, he uses the terms “sociology” or “sociological”.

<sup>5</sup> At the end of the first lecture both terms are casually mentioned (Cours 1978: 23); see also p. 29, note 39 by Senellart.

working conditions of the poor, the elderly and the workers, urban hygiene and public order. The distinction between bare life (*zoè*) and political life (*bios*), which later became a cornerstone of Agamben's theory of biopower (Agamben, 1995), is never made, but a similar distinction between life matters, "the fundamental biological features of the human species" (Cours 1978: 3), and their insertion into the field of political power seems to be presupposed. Power's grip on life is executed by using a new power technique. Its particular characteristic is that it is power *over* life (*pouvoir sur la vie*), that is to say, it "fosters life" (*faire vivre*): "now it is over life throughout its unfolding that power establishes its domination" (VS: 181-182).<sup>6</sup> The object of this new technique is the mass of the people or *population* of a (nation) state. In this respect it differs from discipline, which is individualizing, microphysical power over individual bodies. A few biopower mechanisms are borrowed from earlier legal and disciplinary techniques, including the application of *norms* rather than laws (Cours 1976: 223-4, VS: 189). Later, the 1978 and 1979 Cours will be completely devoted to transformations of pre-modern and early modern powers (pastoral, sovereign, paternal, diplomatic and economic) into modern power/knowledge technologies of population government such as balancing state-economy, *Polizei*, statistics, insurance, welfare politics, neo-liberalism and civil society, yet they are no longer called biopower.

Foucault frames the new power technology of biopower as a *reversal* of the sovereign power over life and death (*le droit de faire mourir ou de laisser vivre*). The paradox of the latter is that it can be exercised over subjects only by taking something away from them, ultimately by killing (*tuer*) them; however, it cannot be applied directly to keep them alive. Foucault expresses this dissymmetry not by using the word kill (*tuer* or *mettre à mort*), but rather the more neutral formula *faire mourir*. In contrast, keeping alive is phrased in a more passive manner as to let live (*laisser vivre*) and the reversal of killing power can now be phrased in a more active, positive way as fostering or even making life (*faire vivre*).

This reversal raises two questions. Why is biopower a reversion and not just a supplement to the killing power of the sovereign? The very first paragraph of the VS text explains that the sovereign killing power was derived from the absolute manorial right and power of the head of the house, the *patria potestas*, albeit in a conditioned manner (VS: 177). Why

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<sup>6</sup> I have changed the order of the phrases; I use the English translation by Robert Hurley in the Penguin edition, p. 138.

does Foucault not simply explain—as he did later in the 1978 Cours, especially lecture 4 - that biopower is just the other side of the coin of *patria potestas*, i.e. caring paternal love for the members of the household? Foucault does not answer this obvious question. The second question is raised by Foucault himself: what remains of the sovereign's killing power after its reversal into biopower? The initial answer would be: "death is carefully evaded", "death is power's limit, the moment that escapes it" (VS: 182) or death becomes a marginal case in political power (Cours 1976: 220-1). On closer inspection, however, Foucault argues, this killing power itself is neither diminished nor substituted, but rather reinforced. At the most, it is completed or covered by biopower (Cours 1976: 214; VS: 183-4), but the true answer is that it comes to light most strongly in the massacres of modern war against the (civil) population, including genocide, and in the potential destruction of the life of the human species by the nuclear power of the military (Cours 1976: 226, VS: 179-180). Also mentioned are the extremes of medical power, that is to say, bioknowledge and biotechnology manipulating biological life (Cours 1976: 226). In VS the death penalty is mentioned as well, although it is rejected as a poor example (VS: 181).

Racism is another - and, perhaps, more alarming - example of the permanence of killing power in biopower (Cours 1976: 227-230). It was developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a new tactic in the biopower family of power technologies of separating *within* a given population that which must stay alive (*doit vivre*) from that which *consequently* must be killed (*doit mourir*). Thus, the sovereign right of life and death, which was a *possible* action and which was "conditioned by the defence of the sovereign and his own survival" (VS: 177), is turned here into the normative urgency of a war case: in order to save the life of a population the bad elements must be destroyed (Cours 1976: 228). Foucault explains how bioracism transforms pre-modern ideas of internal opposition against the sovereign as a permanent war (*lutte*) between races (discussed in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> lecture (Cours 1976: 71,76, 87-88). Moreover, social exclusion, expulsion and repudiation are variations of racism; they are all designed to fragment the population, separating and excluding the bad elements from the sane and good ones. In doing so, biopower replaces the (internal) enemy in civil war with biological dangers to the population (inferior races, degeneracy, abnormality, criminality). Evolutionism and colonization make use of the same kind of biopower split between healthy life, on the one hand, and killing or excluding bad life, on the other, in

order to revitalize or strengthen the (superior) race of a nation state (Cours 1976: 229).

While steering between explaining and describing these two different functions of biopower, Foucault does not refer to some Machiavellian or genealogical view on the Janus face of state power, but rather explicitly refers – at least in the Cours – to the idea or methodological presupposition of politics being the continuation of war by other means. What role does this presupposition play in biopower?

### **Power at war**

In 1975 and 1976, and in those years only, Foucault openly connected power with warfare. At one point, in 1975, he criticized rather vehemently the use of the notion of “crisis” in politics; it had to be replaced, he said, by the slogan of “politics as the continuation of war by other means” (Foucault, 1975a: 3). In *Surveiller et punir* power is never called war, although military explanations and examples of disciplinary power are frequently provided (SP: 31, 170, 292). Moreover, resistance and insurrection are often represented as some sort of permanent civil war; the famous last words of the book “*le grondement de la bataille*” speak for themselves (SP: 315).

In the well-known second lecture of the 1976 Cours, Foucault presented his “analytic of power” using five methodological precautions. The first four of these precautions Foucault had already proposed earlier several times, as early as the 1971 lectures up to and including *Surveiller et punir*. They appear as follows: the first describes knowledge and power as inseparable. Both dominant power and the (local) resistance against power use their own knowledge, truth, discourse and history. Second, power is not a subject’s property or intention, but rather a plurality or variety of circular or sequential technologies; therefore, power’s analysis is inductive or strategic as opposed to deductive. The third precaution introduces the microphysics of power as against deductive and hierarchical concepts of power. And the fourth precaution argues that power is productive rather than negative or repressive: it shapes, constitutes and produces its objects, including individual human bodies and human subjects.

The fifth precaution, however, was a new one: politics and power are a *continuation of war* by other means. It was this idea of power as war that was announced by Foucault to be that year’s topical issue (Cours 1976:15-

16); indeed, it was discussed at length during the Cours. Several discourses on war and sovereignty, including Clausewitz, Hobbes, Machiavelli and Boulainvillier, were discussed. Foucault used his reversal of Clausewitz' formula in order to explain in detail the difference between war against external enemies (*bataille*) and continuous and generalized struggle against the dominant power (*lutte*). The former was connected with pre-modern sovereignty: its right of life and death, confined by the legal system (*l'instance de la règle*), was activated in (external) warfare (Cours 1976: passim, VS: 110). The latter was associated with enduring political opposition, revolt and resistance of the people against (foreign) sovereigns and lords (Cours 1976: passim, 144-147). Post-revolution transformations would turn continuous struggle into class struggle and into civil conflict and competition as general conditions of 19<sup>th</sup> century social and political life (Cours 1976: 193, 201, 211). The transformation of political racism into bioracism, discussed in the previous section, was part of the same process. And so, I would like to suggest, the reversal of sovereign killing power into governmental biopower, which was discussed in the last lecture of the Cours, is another example of a conversion of ongoing internal war or continuous endemic struggle into modern power technology.

The killing power of war, its intrinsic relation with political power and politics, let alone the violence of war and political power, were not really discussed in the Cours. By focusing on a historical account of internal opposition and revolt as a continuous war or struggle of the population with the rulers, Foucault actually redirected his analysis of power *as war* toward one of power *and resistance*. Although his power analyses in the preceding years made regular mention of resistance,<sup>7</sup> it never was theoretically elaborated by Foucault as a characteristic of power analysis. When *Surveiller et punir* was published, resistance immediately became a hot issue because of Foucault's picture of a totalized carceral society without any escape. In the 1976 Cours, resistance against the king or central state power was explicitly discussed as a historical fact in England and France. It was not until the section on method in VS that resistance was openly explained as an *inherent* characteristic of power processes

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<sup>7</sup> E.g., see the November 1971 debate with Chomsky (DE II: 496), some, though not all, of the articles on prison and prison revolts (DE II: 398-399; no. 125) and the debate on anti-psychiatry (e.g. DE II, no. 117, DE II: 684). Resistance is explicitly discussed as a counter-force in *La force de fuir* (DE II no. 118), in the summary of the 1973 Cours (DE II: 467) and of course in the analysis of popular insurgences and illegality in SP. See also Thompson; 2003.

(VS: 125-126), within the general framework of power as a *relationship of force(s) (rapport de(s) force(s))* (VS: 120-121, also see SP: 295-296).

All this has received a great deal of comment and has been reused by many authors, including Giorgio Agamben in his comments on biopower.<sup>8</sup> I cannot avoid the impression that the issue of war, and the question as to whether power and war are really connected, seem to have evaporated in this conceptual move away from politics, being a continuation of war by other means, to power as a field of forces including counter-forces or resistances. Moreover, it should be emphasized that the general concept of power as a force relationship – that is, I assume, as *Wille zur Macht*—is in fact more plausible as a (meta)physical model of reality, but not a model of political power in society and state, let alone a model of war and political violence.<sup>9</sup> After 1977 Foucault stopped linking power to war; twice, war was rejected indirectly (see below), but it was never discussed again. I believe he dropped it altogether, although Foucault never said so outright.

## Reconstruction of the war model of power

Why did Foucault drop the war model of power? I will first reconstruct—in a retrospective comment—the crucial issue in the war model.<sup>10</sup> Power or politics as war was *not* derived from Clausewitz’ concept of war; instead, it had its ultimate basis in Carl Schmitt’s famous or notorious friend-enemy distinction being “the specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced” (Schmitt 1996: 26).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> E.g. see Hanssen, 2000; Lacombe, 1996; Lectures de Michel Foucault (1), 2001; Lemke, 1997 and 2001; Marks, 2000; Michaud, 2000; Neal, 2004; Pasquino, 1993; Reid, 2003; also see the Foucault and/or against Agamben discussion, e.g. in Sarasin, 2003; *Foucault Studies* no. 2 (2005).

<sup>9</sup> The Nietzschean point of *Wille zur Macht*, being a self-force among and against a myriad of other forces, is presupposed also in the idea of permanent resistance. Power as force is more or less explicitly used by Foucault as early as the 1971 article on Nietzsche and history (DE II: no. 184); it is very explicit in *La force de fuir* (1973, DE II: no. 135); in all subsequent discussions of power, governance, domination and truth-telling or parrhêsia Foucault always used the idea of power as a force relationship, see also below, the discussion of “The Subject and Power”.

<sup>10</sup> Also see Neocleous, 1996; Ojakangas, 2001; Reid’s comments on Clausewitz (Reid, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> “The name Schmitt is surrounded by mist, and it may be asked whether this fog is not often manufactured artificially...” says Julien Freund (quoted in the Introduction to *Concept of the Political*, p. 3, see also notes 1-3 of that

Schmitt explains that this distinction ultimately entails war or combat with the external or externalized enemy as a “manifestation” of this distinction; moreover, war and combat “receive their meaning precisely because they refer to the real possibility of physical killing” (Schmitt, 1996: 33). Thus, the core statement emerging from this conception of the political is: *in order to live, the enemy must be killed*. Foucault occasionally referred to this statement in his *Cours* (1976: 230).

Foucault (historically) connects the possibility of killing in war with the sovereign’s power of life and death in pre-modern times. Agamben does the same, referring to Foucault, but then goes on to make explicit use of Schmitt in order to explain what is going on within that connection. He correctly explains that, in Schmitt’s view, it is not the power to kill that links the political directly to the sovereign; rather, the connecting point is in the pre-eminently sovereign act of deciding on the state of exception, in which the friend-enemy distinction and the state of war are reactivated (Agamben, 1995: I, 1 and 3). Killing power here is not a prerogative of the sovereign’s *patria potestas*, manifesting itself in the case of war; it is implied in any political power which (eventually) decides on the friend-enemy split, i.e. on war and, consequently, killing. If we accept Schmitt’s and Agamben’s argument that the friend-enemy distinction, entailing war and the “real possibility” of killing, is the ultimate foundation of any political power, then we have immediately solved Foucault’s problem that killing power has continued to be present in modern times even after the reversal of the right of life and death. In biopower or any other modern political power, although the inherent killing power which in pre-modern and absolutist theories was attributed to the person of the sovereign has been replaced or reshuffled, it cannot be reversed into a non-killing political power.

Schmitt’s war model of political power can be rephrased in a more general statement on political violence. The “real possibility” of violence in political power cannot be reversed into something other than violence. Any reversal of violence is violence too! “To cut off the king’s head”, a

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Introduction). Certainly this was still the case in France during the 1970s and 1980s, although Schmitt’s theory had a prominent place in Raymond Aron, 1962 and Julien Freund, 1965; in André Glucksmann’s well-known book *Le discours de la guerre* (1967) Clausewitz is discussed in detail, but Schmitt is mentioned only once in passing (p. 306, note 3). Foucault never refers to Carl Schmitt; as far as I know, he was completely unaware of Schmitt’s work and was not familiar with the debate in political philosophy on Schmitt’s definition of the political.

well-known phrase in Foucauldian discourse on modern power, is not a metaphor; it refers to real political violence.

In sum, in a war model of power, political power can never be disconnected from the possibility of killing or using violence. Foucault's other four core notions of power, however, clearly contradict the idea of killing and violence in power. It seems as if Foucault designed them to overcome negative associations of power with repression or violence.<sup>12</sup> Thus we must draw the conclusion that a war model of power *proves to be inconsistent* with a conception of productive or positive power, such as disciplinary power and normalization. What, then, is the status of biopower? Is it another post-sovereign, positive power, a new governmental technology, or is it testimony to the permanence of killing power in modern power mechanisms? In the Cours of 1976, Foucault never discussed the inconsistency of the war concept of power with the other four precautions. In *La volonté de savoir* he adopted a middle course: war and politics are alternative tactics for coding "this multiplicity of force relations" (VS: 123).

The best we can say at this point about the status of biopower is that Foucault expressed some doubt about the permanence of killing power, but he did not realize that this killing power was derived from his own war model. In my view, biopower shows that political killing power cannot really be reversed.

### **Foucault's denial of war**

After 1976 Foucault never used the war model of power again. The beginning of the 1978 Cours made it very clear that he was completely through with it. After his rejection of "something which I have called casually, somewhat randomly, biopower" (Cours 1978: 3) he immediately went on to make some general observations about power. It was a set of procedures and mechanisms, he said, that were neither "autogenetic" nor "autosubsistent". In my reading of this text it is here that Foucault disconnects modern, governmental power from sovereignty. His topic is the *politics of truth*, Foucault continues, and so the imperative moment of

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<sup>12</sup> Indirectly in "Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire" (1971, DE II: 145) and in "La vérité et les formes juridiques" (1973, DE II: 547), explicitly in Cours 1974: 15-16 (also see the comment made by Jacques Lagrange in his "Situation" (Cours 1974: 362)), Cours 1975: 48, SP: 32.



power takes effect at the level of discourse only. In other words, he concludes, the relation between truth and struggle (*lutte*) remains within (the domain of) theoretical discourse (Cours 1978: 4-6). Revealingly, he now makes explicit use of the notion of struggle (*lutte*), which was a central topic of his war model of power in 1976, although any connection between “imperative” power and real war or sovereign killing power is rejected. Finally he says, “With all these [remarks] I would like to propose only one imperative, which is categorical and unconditional: never get involved in politics” (Cours 1978: 6, my translation). Next, Foucault began to describe the main subject of the course, paying no attention whatsoever to war or struggle, to sovereign power and its reversal into biopower or to any physical or violent impact of power. In my reading of Foucault, biopower is rejected here *because* it was too strongly associated with the war model or sovereign model of power.

During an interview he had by the end of 1978 Foucault more or less explained why he dropped the war model. While discussing the issue of polemics he criticized ideological discussions because they “get carried away necessarily by the war model”. The idea of ideological fight (*lutte*) was rejected as an overblown or even dangerous presentation of “little disputes”. And, he added, “I tell you: I find this ‘model of war’ not only a little bit ridiculous, but rather dangerous” because, from the moment you are in power (*forza*) or in a situation of real war, the opponent could really be seen or treated as an enemy.<sup>13</sup>

It was not until 1982, in *The Subject and Power*, that Foucault conceptually explained the “distinction”, as he called it, between power and physical influence. War or violence were not mentioned by name; he referred to “that which is exerted over things and gives the ability to modify, use, consume or destroy them”. The distinction proves to be a real distinction; while power is “action upon action,” physical influence or violence is an “objective capacity” “inherent in the body or relayed by external instruments” (Foucault, 1982: 217). But power and physical influence are not separated domains; Foucault calls them different “types

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<sup>13</sup> At the end of the 1978 interview by Trombadori: “è necessariamente tracinati dal <modello della guerra>” (Foucault, 1978b: 83), the French translation is not literal (DE IV: 95); a few lines later: “le dirò: questo <modella della guerra> lo trovo non solo un pò ridicolo, ma anche piuttosto pericoloso” (Foucault, 1978b: 83-84), in DE this sentence is not translated). In 1984, the same line of reasoning is followed in “Polemics, Politics and Problematizations”, including the argument that “the very existence [of the enemy] constitutes a threat” (Foucault, 1984: 383).

of relationships which ... overlap ... support ... and use each other mutually” (Foucault, 1982: 218). Later in the lecture, power relations are called “agonistic”, they are “at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle”, but Foucault does not link *agon* to war; on the contrary, *agon* explicates what essential freedom is (Foucault, 1982: 221-2).

It is with hindsight that I have been able to make the above analysis of the war model of power, its inconsistency with positive power and Foucault’s silent rejection of war. According to Michel Senellart, the editor of the Cours of 1978 and 1979, the immediate cause of Foucault’s rejection of war was his rift, toward the end of 1977, with the radically left, especially the terrorism of the *Rote Armee Fraktion*; he felt himself forced, by Gilles Deleuze<sup>14</sup> and others, to support the request for asylum in France made by Klaus Croissant, the lawyer representing the *RAF*, but he refused to support the *RAF* or the ideology of armed resistance (Cours 1978: 385-6). In my reading, the opening remarks of the 1978 Cours were directly inspired by this incident. And it was the fate of biopower to be rejected, too, because it was infected by war-like ideas of power.

### Epilogue: biopower and normalization

At first glance, medicine, health care and the process of medicalization do not seem to be decisive factors in Foucault’s presentation of biopower or biopolitics. Medicalization somehow has always been present in Foucault’s work on psychiatry and incarceration, while medical discourse and the power/knowledge of health care have been annex fields of genealogy. Still, with the exception of the three lectures in Rio de Janeiro in 1974, medicine as such was not a topic in Foucault’s research or writings of the early 1970s.<sup>15</sup> Foucault also rarely refers to his 1963 book on medicine and health care, *Naissance de la clinique*, as a source of his ideas on power.<sup>16</sup> Yet, (medical) knowledge as a formative power, its

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<sup>14</sup> See Deleuze, 2003a: 134-137. In 1986 Deleuze personally attributed his estrangement from Foucault to their differing conceptions of society: “You are right: society [to me] is a fluid or ... a gas. To Foucault it is architecture” (Deleuze, 2003b: 261, my translation).

<sup>15</sup> I could find only one publication, “Les grandes fonctions de la médecine dans notre société” (DE II: no. 110); all other publications on modern hospitals and the politics of health are dated after 1975.

<sup>16</sup> *Naissance de la clinique* is only mentioned in interviews looking back on Foucault’s past works; in most cases, the book is mentioned bracketed together with *Histoire de la folie*; see ‘Index des oeuvres’ (DE IV: 860).

institutionalization in social practice and the socio-political role of the professional apparatus of medicine is already present in that book. Most important, however, is the topic of normalization, which plays a prominent role both in discipline and in biopower. In *Naissance de la clinique*, while referring to Canguilhem's *Le normal et la pathologique*, the conceptual structure of normalization as inclusion instead of exclusion is already disentangled in Foucault's analysis of the consequences of the introduction of the pathological and the normal in medical discourse. At the end of the book Foucault states that, as a result, our culture changed from a death-against-life culture into modern culture where death is inserted or included in life. This idea was reused and critically elaborated in the "analytic of finitude" in *Les mots et les choses* (Foucault, 1966: ch. IX-3). However, Foucault rarely referred to this point during the 1970s. Although he regularly mentioned Canguilhem's book in his discussion of normalization<sup>17</sup> and, in some interviews, clearly touched on the dominant role of modern medicine in the normalized society (DE III: no. 173), he never referred to his own analysis of the 1960s. Normalization is always discussed from the perspective of legal discourse; it is a peculiar combination of pre-modern sovereign law and the rule-following microphysics of modern disciplinary power (SP: 180-186, VS: 189-190). In the 1978 Cours, normalization is discussed briefly and only once: what is going on in normalization within discipline, Foucault explains, rather is "normation", i.e. the prescription of a given law-like norm; differences between the normal and the abnormal are derived from that norm (Cours 1978: 58-59). This normation is somehow a transformation or derivation of the law system (Cours 1978: 58) or the "insistence of the rule" (VS: 110), which was discussed several times in earlier courses and books. New governmentalization techniques, however, and especially the security system, derive the meaning of normalization and the normal—and its derivate, the norm—from statistical characteristics of normal distributions (Cours 1978: 64-65). This is the only occasion where a historical reversal of the pre-modern, administrative power techniques of normation into modern statistical knowledge of normalization is discussed. Perhaps Foucault was in search of that epistemic shift in the power/knowledge *dispositif* in his attempt to reverse sovereign power into biopower over a

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<sup>17</sup> See Cours 1974: 200, Cours 1975: 45-46, SP: 186; Foucault is referring here in a general way to Canguilhem's book and never explains what Canguilhem's conception of the normal has to do with normalization. Note that in his 1978 Introduction to the English translation of Canguilhem's book (DE III: no. 219) Foucault does not mention normalization at all.

population. Yet he did not use this explanation in his 1978 and 1979 Cours.

What I would like to argue is that the repudiation of biopower can be explained conceptually by the contradiction between the two different concepts of death discussed in *Naissance de la clinique*. On the one hand, there is death against life or death as the fatal end of life. This exclusive disjunction of life and death is entailed in violence, war, killing power and, unfortunately, also in biopower as a reversal of sovereign killing power. On the other hand, death as an intrinsic element of normal(ized) life is the characteristic of modern medical power/knowledge. This inclusive relationship of life and death is entailed also in population issues such as demography, morbidity, social security, (life) insurance and so on. I contend that the latter inclusive conception of life and death is the fundamental principle of normalization. It is this conception, too, that is presupposed both in the art of governing and in the art of living. In sum, it was not accidental that biopolitics was mentioned for the first time in a lecture on medicine and health care. It was Foucault's historical knowledge of the development of medicine, medicalization and state medicine around 1800 that constituted the cradle of his notion of biopower.

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FOUCAULT'S DELEUZE;  
OR, ON THE INCORPOREALITY  
OF TRANSFORMATION IN FOUCAULT

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Given the recent explosion of critical work on Deleuze, we're beginning to get a pretty good critical handle on what we might call "Deleuze's Foucault" – which is to say, there's no shortage of insightful exegesis and commentary on Deleuze's foundational book *Foucault*, as well as Deleuze's many interviews concerning Foucault and his legacy.<sup>1</sup> However, rather than look further into the myriad (and more or less overt) ways that Deleuze read, learned from, and was provoked by Foucault, I'd like in this essay to reverse the critical polarity, and try to think about the ways that Foucault transversally linked his projects to the itineraries and conceptual personae of Deleuze.

I'll try quickly to sketch out Foucault's reading of Deleuze, and think about how that intervention recoils on and propels Foucault's own texts. But in the end I'm interested in going more indirectly – and, oddly, more "globally" – at Deleuze's place in Foucault's thought. In short, I'd like to argue that Foucault isn't so much influenced by Deleuze in terms of X or Y philosophical concept (force, life, desire, pragmatics, multiplicity); rather, I'll argue that there is a kind of pervasive "Deleuzianism" that marks the whole of Foucault's post-archaeological work (from 1969 forward). Mobilizing "Foucault's Deleuze" in this way will become less a matter of recapitulating a reading or commentary done by one thinker on another, and will instead constitute an experimental attempt to think about

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to Deleuze's *Foucault*, see his cluster of interviews on Foucault's work in *Negotiations* (including Deleuze's "updating" of Foucault in "Postscript on Societies of Control"), as well as his notes to Foucault concerning the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*, "Desire and Pleasure." See also the joint interview "Intellectuals and Power," where a careful reading makes their differences seem less philosophical than stylistic.



Deleuze's work as a primary relational tonality, counterpoint, or pitch for the middle and late Foucault.

Before getting to Foucault's Deleuze, however, there is one crucial bit of Deleuze's Foucault that I need to highlight. In the 25 years since Foucault's death, one of the obsessions surrounding Foucault criticism has been the critical impulse to periodize his work, to account for the historical shifts and phases of his peripatetic research itineraries. The consensus has come to look something like this: there's the early neo-structuralist Foucault (ending with 1969's *Archaeology of Knowledge*); then there's the middle "power" or "genealogical" Foucault (beginning with his December 1970 inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, *The Order of Discourse*, thru *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of the *History of Sexuality* in 1976); and finally, there's the late Foucaultian concern with making one's life a work of art – the last lecture courses and the second and third volumes of *History of Sexuality*. This late work is sometimes also thought of as the "subject-centered" or "ethical" Foucault.

In terms of our prevailing picture of Foucault, the gaps between major book projects in Foucault's career often tell the tale, a *Bildungsroman* of revelatory failures. The publishing gap between the *Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish* (1969 to 1975) marks the abandonment of Foucault's neo-structuralist concept of discursive formation, and the concomitant turn to the genealogical concerns of power. The second gap – from 1976's Volume 1 to the publication of Volumes 2 & 3 of the *History of Sexuality* in 1984 – is in turn indicative of the failure of the (too-totalizing) power discourse, signaling Foucault's turn to questions of ethical resistance, subjectivity, and making one's self a work of art. In short, the early neo-structuralist work on discourse falters in the late 60s; leading Foucault to consider the higher question of power in the 70s; which in its turn proves too totalizing, leading Foucault finally to the mature, late work on resistance and subjectivity in the 1980s. On this reading, Foucault's career begins to look like it's explicitly modeled on the consciousness that is the star of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* -- ever-seeking, ever-failing, ever-learning, on its way to the inevitable revelation of absolute spirit as the chiasmic reversals of subjective desire. In the end, or so this prevailing story concludes, Foucault embraces a

version of the very neo-humanist subjectivity that he had, in the 1960s and 70s, so savagely attacked.<sup>2</sup>

I rehearse this fiction in the present context largely because it was Deleuze who first tried to suggest that it was bunk. In fact, one might argue that the primary polemical thrust of Deleuze's work on Foucault in the immediate wake of his death was to interrupt or prevent this kind of Hegelian history from being written about Foucault. Deleuze goes out of his way to insist, time and again, that Foucault's was a continuous experimental research agenda, a series of problems intensified and sharpened by each new discovery, rather than a series of attempted (and failed) conceptual or methodological totalizations. So Deleuze's book *Foucault* argues that Foucault's mid-career work on power is in fact an intensification, rather than an abandonment, of the Foucaultian problematics of the statement; concomitantly, the subjectivity or biopower series of Foucault's last works constitutes a further sharpening and generalization of the discourse of power, rather than an embarrassed, hasty retreat from it.

Why is this important, you ask, outside the rather academic concern for being "right" (or not) about Foucault's career trajectory? For the record, while I do think, along with Deleuze, that the Hegelian readings of Foucault's career trajectory are demonstrably "wrong," for me that's not the major problem with them (of course, they're demonstrably "right" as well). I do not undertake this inquiry primarily in the name of a "better understanding" of either Foucault or Deleuze; rather, I do so in the name of re-activating Foucault's analyses and conceptual vocabulary for use in the contemporary situation – the very project that convenes this volume. Because if indeed the late Foucault is what most secondary work says he is – a thinker who abandoned the statement and the question of power to become a booster for individual self-creation as resistance to the normalizing imperatives of disciplinary culture – then that secondary work's final judgment on Foucault is also, it seems to me, inexorably correct. As Lois McNay writes, summarizing a chestnut of Foucault criticism, such a supposedly "ethical moment amounts in fact to little more than a fetishization of a notion of aesthetic practice" (134). On the dominant reading, the late Foucaultian turn to the self-creating subject and its artistic agency can only remind us of present-day American military

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<sup>2</sup> For a more comprehensive background on this reading of Foucault's career, and extensive citation from the secondary literature, see my *Foucault Beyond Foucault* (1-13). Section III of the present essay is reworked from *FBF* as well.

recruiting posters (“Become an Army of 1”) or the corporate slogan of Microsoft: “Where would you like to go today?” Whatever one may have thought of “artistic self-creation” as an imperative resistant to the dominant culture of the 1980s, it’s now ubiquitously familiar to us. And not so much from avant-garde art practices or difficult ethical imperatives, but largely from advertising: “Saab: Choose your own Road,” “Outback Steakhouse: No Rules, Just Right.” Or the ad agency’s constant helpful reminders concerning the links between authentic cultural rebels and the products by which we know them: Jack Kerouac wore khakis; Ghandi would have used a Macintosh computer; Cadillacs are all about Rock n Roll, etc. In other words, if in the end Foucault indeed became primarily a thinker of artistic self-fashioning as ethical resistance, then Foucault’s work would seem to have very little critical to say about the present, especially the *economic* present, as it seems super-saturated with these very practices of endless, fetishized self-creation.

Todd May has dubbed this dominant interpretation the “prodigal son” reading of Foucault, but this reception of the late Foucault reminds me less of the Bible and more of an old Borscht Belt Jewish joke: two infants are switched by mistake at a New York hospital, one the son of an eminent Rabbi, the other the son of a vacationing Minnesota couple. The Rabbi’s son then heads to Bemidji, while the nice Luthern boy goes to Brooklyn to be the future of Talmudic studies; but of course by the time the kids hit puberty, things just don’t seem right on either end, and a paternity test in New York turns up the problem. A crack team of Old Testament scholars is dispatched to Minnesota to talk to the boy, now a young man. As the punchlines always go in these jokes, the scholars say to the boy: “Son, we have good news and bad news. The good news is that you’re a Jew, and a very prominent one. The bad news is that, as a leader of the Jewish community, you’ve been a terrible disappointment to us.”<sup>3</sup> I’d never make it as a Catskills comic, but in any case, here’s the upshot of the joke, re the Northamerican reception of Foucault: the seeming good news is that Foucault has all along been a kind of closeted liberal rather than a secret anarchist; he’s a thinker of individual, resistant subjectivity – not the iron-cage canalizations of power. However, the inevitable bad news is that, as a thinker of subjectivity in this liberal tradition of political theory (say, from Kant to Habermas), Foucault remains a terrible disappointment: the aesthetics of self-creation seems hopelessly vague (and, despite the best

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<sup>3</sup> I steal this joke from Gregg Flaxman, who has used it to make a similar point about Deleuze’s American reception.

intentions of those who see a lot of potential there, constantly updated aesthetic self-creation does remain tailor-made for translation into the truisms of late, later, or just-in-time consumption capitalism). In addition, and perhaps more damningly for the “good news” of Foucault’s late subjective turn, Foucault has no theory of “intersubjectivity” to speak of (which is to say, on the terms of the very neo-Kantian subjectivist tradition into which he’s being slotted, Foucault has no theory of politics whatsoever).

All of this reminds me most succinctly of Peter Hallward’s problem with Deleuze in *Out of this World*: if you read Deleuze as a political thinker subjectivity or citizenship (if the properly political question is the individual and its relations to the state), all Deleuze can tell you is, “run away” (or, on someone like Žižek’s reading, Deleuze can only seem like an apologist and cheerleader for privatized, neo-liberal market capitalism).<sup>4</sup> Of course, Deleuze is not a traditionalist thinker of subjectivity; nor, am I arguing here, is Foucault. My point being, if either Foucault or Deleuze is primarily read within the prevailing terms of liberal – or, if you prefer the adjectives *du jour*, “radical” or “militant” – academic political theory, then these sorts of critiques are inevitably correct: Foucault and Deleuze do in fact have little to add to a discourse that turns on the “individual-state” pivot, precisely because they’re trying to swerve around it. If you’re looking for a recognizable modern “political theory” (which is to say, a theory of the state), Foucault quite literally and deliberately has none.<sup>5</sup> And this is why the old Shecky Greene joke is perhaps a more telling indication of Foucault’s recent reception than the prodigal son story is: at least some people were happy to see the prodigal son, and he was integrated back into the family fold (“He was lost, and is found. And they began to make merry” – Luke

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<sup>4</sup> See Hallward’s *Out of This World* and Žižek’s *Organs without Bodies*, where he calls Deleuze “the ideologist of late capitalism” (184).

<sup>5</sup> As Foucault makes clear in his *Birth of Biopolitics* lecture course, one in fact can’t have a political theory if one has a “theory of the state.” To the imagined question “How can you write history if you do not accept a priori the existence of things like the state, society, the sovereign and subjects?”, Foucault responds: “Historicism starts from the universal and, as it work, puts it through the grinder of history. My problem is exactly the opposite. I start from the theoretical and methodological decision that consists in saying: Let’s suppose that universals do not exist... starting from the decision that universals do not exist, asking what kind of history we can do” (3). Politics, in short, will be a history or genealogy of practices – arts of governance – rather than a developing history of the ideal form of the state.

15:24). Foucault I think gets more of the Borsch-Belt welcome: the good news is, we've recently discovered that you're one of us; but the bad news is that virtually everything you've done remains a terrible disappointment to us. Mainstream political theory puts out a welcome mat for the late Foucault, but it turns out to be an immense banana peel in disguise.

In any case, as I argue at greater length in *Foucault Beyond Foucault*, it is from this fate as a thinker of creative, resistant individualism – *quite literally as a neo-liberal theorist* – that we need to dislodge the late Foucault, if indeed his work is to be useful as any kind of critical wedge to intervene in the world that has configured itself in the years since Foucault's death. And following out Foucault's a-subjective Deleuzianism is, it seems to me, one very productive line of inquiry in the service of that project.

## II. Around 1970: Foucault on Deleuze

Foucault's most extended formal engagement with Deleuze's texts is of course "Theatrum Philosophicum," a review essay specifically taking up *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, published in *Critique* in November 1970 (which coincides with the beginning stages of Foucault's "middle" or "genealogical" period of work on "power": "The Order of Discourse" inaugural lecture at the Collège de France was delivered several weeks later, on December 2, 1970; and "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" would appear in a Festschrift for Hyppolite in early 1971). If indeed Foucault's thought is in the midst of a transformation at the point of composing "Theatrum Philosophicum," it would be tempting to look for a kind of signature effect at work in this text, with Foucault trying out new insights and directions under the guise of summarizing Deleuze; and there are of course moments that seem like straight-out identification in the essay (or one might prefer to think of them as proleptic self-plagiarism on Foucault's part): Foucault argues, for example, that Deleuze "does not proceed – with a drumroll – toward the great Repression of Western philosophy; he registers, as if in passing, its oversights. He points out its interruption, its gaps, those small things of little value neglected by philosophical discourse" (348) – which sounds, all in all, like a pretty good thumbnail definition of Foucaultian "genealogy."

But, surprisingly enough, the most insistent point that Foucault mines from Deleuze in this essay is not what commentators are accustomed to finding in Foucault's mid-career, "genealogical" work – namely, an

insistence on the irreducible materiality of practices and the body; rather, Foucault emphasizes something completely different, “what Deleuze would perhaps not allow us to call [*thought’s*] ‘*incorporeal materiality*’” (346, my emphasis). In short, it is not an emphasis on the brute materiality of the physical world that Foucault mines from Deleuze, but far rather an “incorporeal” logic of “the event.” For Foucault, Deleuze’s thought offers us a profound revitalization of philosophy, that “discourse dealing with the *materiality of incorporeal things*” (347, my emphasis). Far from finding in Deleuze an emphasis on the palpable body or the practices that mold it, Foucault offers us this Deleuzian imperative: “It is all this swarming of the *impalpable* that must be integrated into our thought” (346, my emphasis).

If we do take Foucault’s 1970 essay on Deleuze to comprise a parallel series with the power-genealogy focus that Foucault is building at around the same time, Foucault’s Deleuze would seem to allow us to think somewhat differently about the Foucaultian discourse of power and subjectivity. As Foucault writes about the provocation that Deleuze’s thought comprises,

The event – a wound, a victory-defeat, death – is always an effect produced entirely by bodies colliding, mingling, or separating, *but this effect is never of a corporeal nature*; it is the intangible, inaccessible battle that returns and repeats itself....The weapons that tear into bodies form an endless incorporeal battle. Physics concerns causes, but events, which arise as its effects, no longer belong to it. (349, emphasis added)

If we take what Foucault calls Deleuze’s “quasi-physics of incorporeals” (349) as a concept that is in fact equally crucial to Foucault’s itinerary after 1969, I think it gives a more accurate picture of Foucault, and in addition it allows us to swerve around certain dead ends in the Foucault secondary literature. For example, such a – let’s call it Deleuzian, though no one in particular owns this idea -- emphasis on “incorporeal materiality” allows us to consistently remind ourselves of a point that is too often lost in work that takes its inspiration from Foucault: namely, the insight that the power relation in Foucault does not name a “negative” relation of domination between *bodies, concrete objects, institutions, or persons*, but a “positive” relation among *virtual or incorporeal forces*. Even if the *effects* of a given power relation are unequivocally negative (yielding death, misery, destruction or domination), the relation itself takes place between and among positive, “material” yet “incorporeal” forces or capacities. To iterate a piece of the normative consensus surrounding

Foucaultian power, it is not a thing that is hoarded or held by a few institutions, groups or individual people. This is the case precisely because power parses out those “antagonists,” rather than vice versa: power’s primary confrontation is, in Foucault’s concise words, “force against force” (*D&P* 26). In other words, power regulates *relations*, not *objects*, precisely because if power can successfully regulate the relations, it gets the objects for free -- there are no “natural” or essential objects or persons that somehow exist “before” power relations. This, perhaps, is the most succinct example of the “profound Nietzscheanism” (*Foucault* 71) that Deleuze reads in Foucault’s work: “the doer is merely a fiction added to the deed, the deed is all” (*Genealogy of Morals*, section 13). In every modern mode after the sovereign one, power names a capacity that works on other capacities, an act that acts on “incorporeal” actions or potential actions rather than primarily on the actual surface of “material” bodies or other nouns.

### III. *Discipline and Punish*: Foucaultian Intensity

Among the less discussed conceptual personae that Foucault overtly takes up from Deleuze is the vocabulary of “intensity.” While the concept “intensity” is most often associated with the work of Deleuze, it plays a crucial -- and interestingly mutative -- role in Foucault. A quick tour through Foucault’s *Dits et écrits* shows that Foucault doesn’t use the word “intensity” at all before 1969, where it first appears (predictably) in a brief note on Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition*. The word appears again in 1970’s “Theatrum Philosophicum,” and in 1971’s “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”; then once in 1973, twice in 1974, and three times in 1975. Foucault begins using the word more frequently in the published texts of 1976, and it shows up more than a dozen times in his occasional writings between 1976-79, becoming in fact a kind of refrain for talking about “power.”

In the early pages of *D&P*, “intensity” carries the usual dictionary meaning, an overflowing of feeling or a heightened state of physical awareness. As Foucault writes of the condemned person in the “Spectacle of the Scaffold” chapter, “every death agony expresses a certain truth: but, when it takes place on the scaffold, it does so with more intensity, in that it is hastened by pain” (45-6). However, when Foucault’s genealogy shifts its focus as power moves “beyond” the physical body, so too does his usage of the word or concept of “intensity.” For example, among the innovations of “societal” power is what Foucault calls “The Rule of

Lateral Effects,” which holds the following: “The penalty must have its most intense effects [*ses effets les plus intenses*] on those who have not committed the crime; to carry this argument to its limit, if one could be sure that the criminal could not repeat the crime, it would be enough to make others believe he had been punished. *There is a centrifugal intensification of effects* [*intensification centrifuge des effets*], which leads to the paradox that in the calculation of penalties the least important element is still the criminal” (95, my emphasis). In Foucault’s economics of power, this “centrifugal intensification of effects” is the name for the literal movement “away” from power’s enactment on actual surface of the criminal’s body, toward the more efficient and socially useful targeting of what the body can, will, or is likely to do -- from sovereign power’s obsessive emphasis on an individual offender to be punished, to the somewhat cooler political concern with the efficiency of crime and punishment’s effects on others.

As *D&P*’s analysis progresses, the process of “intensification” comes to refer less a centripetal force acting on an individual body (“intense pain”), and more to name a “lateral” or “centrifugal” smearing or saturation of effects over a wide field (intensity as a state that strives to be complete and exhaustive, as seamless as possible -- as in “intensive care”). As Foucault writes about panopticism’s modality of discipline, “The panoptic schema makes any apparatus of power *more intense*: it assures economy (in material, in personnel, in time); it assures its efficacy by its preventative character, its continuous functioning and its automatic mechanisms... without any physical instrument other than architecture and geometry, it acts directly on individuals” (206, my emphasis). By the end of *D&P*, power’s intensity (from the Latin *intensus*, stretched tight) is the name not so much for a bodily experience, but for a saturated field: just as everything in the desert is bathed in sunlight’s intensity, so everything in the factory is the product of an intensified form of discipline.

One might say that as power becomes more incorporeal, migrating farther from the surface of the material body, it also becomes more intense. This movement away from the material body is the one-way directionality of *D&P* – the book takes us from the frenzy surrounding the tortured body to the cool sureties of the panoptic institution. Indeed, if there were a general Foucaultian “formula” for power’s intensification in *D&P*, it might look something like this recipe:

Shift the object and change the scale. Define new tactics in order to reach a target that is now more subtle but also more widely spread in the social



body. Find new techniques for adjusting punishment to the target and for adapting its effects. Lay down new principles for regularizing, refining, universalizing the art of punishing. Homogenize its application. Reduce its economic and political cost by increasing its effectiveness and by multiplying its circuits. (89, translation slightly modified)

On Foucault's account, then, punitive power never could have mutated into other sectors of the socius had it become stalled in the sovereign mode, which obtains its discontinuous effects only at an exorbitant "cost," both economically and politically. Direct, violent manipulation of each individual resistant body is both expensive and not terribly efficient -- a point that Foucault makes quite memorably through *D&P's* opening narration of the regicide's horrible torture and execution, and its immediate juxtaposition with the calmer and more effective intensities of the neo-monastic rulebook. Each mode, perhaps, seeks a similar result, though the result is obtained at very different costs, by widely different modalities of power's intensity.

On Foucault's account, the "gentle way in punishment" first discovers the efficiency of this virtual character of punishment, and power's relation to intensity as a saturated field (rather than a concentrated centripetal effect on the surface of an individual body): power is not merely concerned with violently controlling individual bodies, one by one, but with multiplying the confrontations of virtual, centrifugal forces with other forces. As Foucault writes, one of "social" power's primary mechanisms for mutation is to "reverse the relation of intensities": "against a bad passion, a good habit; against a force, another force.... set the force that drove the criminal to the crime against itself" (106). In short, in its emergence out of the sovereign mode, power discovers its object not as the individual body, but the virtual field of that body's capacities or forces. Power in fact begins to reconfigure what a body is -- not an inert tabula rasa to be written on, but a series of "forces" or capacities, some of which power helps to develop in specific areas of practice and application, some of which it functions to stifle. And the most effective means of such punitive intervention is not sovereign force against flesh, but some more "intense" modality of force against force: "set the force that drove the criminal to the crime against itself." Allow some forces easier canals to develop, and quash others by separating them from what they can do.

A couple of necessary caveats on the way to a conclusion: I'm certainly not arguing here that Foucault and Deleuze agree on their thematization of the event, or that they have the very same concepts of intensity, virtuality,

or incorporeal transformation. For Deleuze, intensity is “paradoxical,” both difference and repetition, singularity and spread; and it is an ontological or transhistorical phenomenon, an attribute of being itself.<sup>6</sup> As Deleuze defines the “univocity of being” in *Difference and Repetition*, “Being is said in a single and same sense of everything of which it is said, but that of which it is said differs: it is said of difference itself” (36). For Foucault on the other hand, intensification is a quality not of being, but of power, and it primarily names the movement of its increasing spread throughout the socius: power’s intensification is its increasing saturation or generalization from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onward in Europe. In short, for Foucault the “incorporeal” quality of discipline and/or biopower is a thoroughly *historical* claim: the genealogy of modern power, since the early modern or sovereign era in Europe, shows this increasingly intense, molecular dispersion of power, away from the surface of the corporeal body. In *D&P*, we quite literally go from the bodily drawing and quartering of the regicide Damiens to the cooler, incorporeal intensities of the panopticon, from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (and beyond to the even “more” incorporeal biopower of the 20<sup>th</sup> in Volume I of the *History of Sexuality*). In the end, then, I don’t at all wish to collapse Deleuze’s project into Foucault’s or vice versa; my only provocation here is that Foucault’s mid-career and late work on power and subjectivity is characterized by a kind of diffuse, pervasive, one might even say “intense” Deleuzianism – which is to say, Foucault’s post-1969 work is characterized by a commitment to the immanence of the event and the irreducibility of force: in short, the *incorporeality* of transformation.

In addition, with this picture of intensification as historical spread, lightening, and saturation of power beyond the corporeal body, we can see Foucault’s late work on subjectivity not as an abandonment of the work on power, but an intensification of it: Foucault shows us that since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, power could be more accurately characterized as biopower, whose primary pivot is the subject and its relations to this murky thing called “life.” Once one discovers biopower and its historical ascendancy, one is more or less then committed to studying the practices of making

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Deleuze’s *Logic of Sense*, which begins with the provocation that “paradox is the affirmation of both senses or directions at the same time” (1). For his part, in “Desire and Pleasure,” Deleuze locates the differences between his thought and Foucault’s in the two words “desire” (Deleuze’s watchword, intolerable to Foucault due to its Hegelian and Lacanian legacies) and “pleasure” (a Foucaultian touchstone difficult for Deleuze to accept for all the reasons he lays out in *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty*).

ourselves subjects – not to escape the totalizing reach of the prior discourse on power, but to refine it, follow it out in its immanent itinerary. We have to go where power leads us, and since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it's lead us directly to the problematic of subjectivity, our virtual relations to ourselves – our identity, our sexuality, our lifestyles. To put it bluntly, it's not just that Foucault gives up the anti-humanism of the structuralist phase and the iron-cage pessimism of power, and finally decides to be nice about liberal subjectivity toward the end of his life; it's that the liberal modes of subjectivity – governmentality, biopower, and the ethical relation to the self – were the modes of subjectivization he was studying when he died. To say that he was a booster for these modes makes no more sense than saying that he was a big fan of the prison, the madhouse, the clinic, or any of the other modes of subjectivization he studied.

In hasty conclusion, then, emphasizing “Foucault's Deleuze” not only allows to recall a bit more accurately how Foucaultian power actually functions (through incorporeal, but yet still deeply historical, transformation: discipline targets the virtuality of our actions, while biopower works on and through the incorporeal categories of identity, sexuality, demographics, and so on); but more importantly “Foucault's Deleuze” allows us to recall why Foucault's middle and late work remains an important discovery and unmet provocation still for us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In short, insisting on Foucault's Deleuzianism allows us to re-thematize Foucault's life or works not as a fragmented and tragically failed search for totalizing concepts or authentic modes of subjective transgression, but as a commitment to a singular project of eventual experimentation, a toolbox or a user's manual, a collective project that remains open for us to continue: the statement, power, and the subject as a discontinuous line of transformation that speaks in many voices, all archived under the incorporeal mask of one Michel Foucault.

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**SECTION IV:**  
**EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGY**

THE SHEPHERD, THE MARKETER  
AND THE ACTUARY:  
EDUCATION-BASED SERVICE LEARNING  
AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AS NEO-LIBERAL  
GOVERNMENTALITIES

DION DENNIS

(in memory of Richard V. Ericson)

**Introduction**

At the end of the first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> Century, here's the plight of the American nation-state: Mired in an expensive and indefinite war defined by ambiguous goals and dubious outcomes; careening from the effects of decades-long profligate lending and spending; stripped, by its own fiscal policies of its once-durable ideological legitimation (the viability of the American Dream, and the promise of self-reinvention on their putative deathbeds); no longer isolated from terrorism and climate change because of increasingly interconnected technological flows and striations; the nation-state can no longer be plausibly represented by the Hobbesian Leviathan as the voluntary surrender of individual wills for a collective and beneficent peace. As Richard V. Ericson noted, it is the Leviathan of the Old Testament that now dominates the contemporary political *imaginarium*, the figure of an omnivorous and enraged monster routinely if unpredictably tossing masses of fragile humans across a black and turgid Sea of Chaos.<sup>1</sup>

How did we get here? Commonly, it has been explained as a crisis of faith in almost all institutions, from government to religion, with the exception of two: The Family and The Market. Margaret Thatcher's famous Halloween 1987 utterance crystallized the sentiment, one that typified the econometric ethnocentrism of Neo-Liberalism 1.0:

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<sup>1</sup>Ericson, *Crime in an Insecure World*, 32.

There's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women ... and there are families ... people [must] look to themselves first.<sup>2</sup>

Here are the components of the dark heart of Neo-Liberalism 1.0: A security-oriented privatism, a re-stratified consumerism, and the celebration of an ethos of hyper-competition and radical individualism. Thatcher's aphorism was also roughly concurrent with the initial rise of North American educational discourses and practices known as civic engagement and service learning, although the manifest fruits of the conjunction of the neo-liberal and higher education only emerge with the rise of Neo-Liberal 2.0 ideologies and governmentalities. Below, what follows is a cursory sketch of Neo-Liberalism 2.0, as most fully articulated by the U.K.'s Conservative Party (although embodied, via discourse and practice, in the U.S., as well). The subsequent discussion examines how colleges and universities across the United States have become a pivotal nexus for radical and intensive shifts in social assumptions of risk, paired with a new rhetoric of morality, and accompanied by ubiquitous, mundane and exponentially enhanced forms of surveillance. It's all a part of a generalized, if dispersed project of intensified governance through communities, achieved through new forms of governmentalities; governmentalities that are at the core of Neo-Liberalism 2.0.

## **Neo-Liberalism 2.0: The Problem Defined, The Solution Proposed**

In a small but much cited booklet (and its earlier iterations), *On Fraternity*, Danny Kruger, ideological advisor to British Conservative Party leader David Cameron, discusses what he terms the “social desertification” that accompanied the success of Neo-Liberalism 1.0. Beginning in the 1980s, Kruger delineates three general vectors of three demographic trends that define social desertification: 1. Wealth re-stratification patterns, where the rich get much richer, and everyone else slides down the SES ladder; 2. Generational conflict, which, as Kruger put it, sets “the vast army of the retired and soon-to-retire [against] our increasingly strident and alienated youth, not only for material resources, [and] political power [but] ... national respect;” and 3. the fragmenting tendencies of multiculturalism, “which [sustains] ... large communities with different national origins and, therefore, alternative cultural traditions.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Thatcher, *Interview for Women's Own*.

<sup>3</sup> Kruger, *On Fraternity: Politics Beyond Liberty and Equality*, 2-6.



For Neo-Liberalism 2.0, the urgency of the moment, the defining problem of our time is that of combating social fragmentation and decay by attending to quality of life issues. Rejecting the Thatcherite denial of society, a key component of Neo-Liberalism 1.0, Neo-Liberalism 2.0 embraces society, under the constitutive banner of Fraternity:

Fraternity is real and self-generating ... the function ... of society itself, the messy and plural . . . mixture of our personal associations. Fraternity does not concern the freedom of the individual (the abstract one) or the equality of the people (the abstract all) but the quality of relationships among the communities we inhabit ...

Fraternity is the sphere of belonging, of membership, the sphere of identity and particularity. It exists in civil society, in the arena of commercial and social enterprise, of family and nation. It concerns neighbourhood, voluntary association, faith, and all the other elements of identity ... it is cultural ...<sup>4</sup>

What matters ... [is] not their notional equality but their relationship, their shared memories and common home—their fraternity [not equality]. (Kruger)<sup>5</sup>

By postulating Fraternity, rather than Liberty or Equality as the center of Neo-Liberalism 2.0, the dominant ideology of Neo-Liberalism 1.0 has been supplanted: Sociocentrism supersedes Econocentrism as the constitutive ideological element and the primary governance problematic.

As an über signifier for local, complex, intersecting and varied sets of relationships and practices, Fraternity is rhetorically constructed as the pivotal element of civil society, a zone of freedom and voluntary affiliation, in a principled and existentially pure extra-statist form. (In making this rhetorical move, Kruger problematically reconstructs the essentialist dichotomies of state/society and institution/practice that Foucault so convincingly disassembled, with his notions of relations of power and governmentality, in the 1970s). In an astute recognition, Kruger correctly perceives that a core discourse of Fraternity, which consists of an apparently apolitical notion of community and unproblematic definition of civic engagement as an *a priori* virtue, exists across the entirety of conventional political parties, platforms and

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<sup>4</sup> Kruger, *The Right Dialectic*, September 2006.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

coalitions.<sup>6</sup> As noted above, privileging the network of relations that constitute Fraternity, over Liberty and Equality, as the political means and goal, indicates a shift in what constitutes Social Justice, across the political spectrum: With the ascendance of Fraternity as the central political value, social density comes to denote social justice (an accentuated social density *is* social justice), in the early 21st Century. As such, social density supplants well-known libertarian notions of freedom, or the statist economic redistribution of benefits. This rewriting of the definition of social justice occurs across the spectrum of political affiliations.

Given the realities of long term fiscal crises, and the need for states to off-load direct service obligations (obligations that entail providing various forms of security—social, financial, health and personal safety), righteous moral rhetoric reifying this off-loading, during a period of structural crisis, is inevitable. For Kruger, the call is to “change state institutions into social ones by a sort of reverse alchemy – artificial into natural.”<sup>7</sup> (Note the essentialization of civil society. The goal is to transfer the management of social risk to individuals and localities. In responsabilizing citizens as moral subjects and local social control agents in their communities, all sorts of state-private partnerships emerge,<sup>8</sup> for the delivery of public goods and services, and new governmentalities emerge, to create requisite notions of the “responsible citizen” via the installation and use of concomitant surveillance/audit mechanisms. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, perhaps there are no public sites more intensively, if variably, engaged in this responsabilization via restatification project, across the U.S., than public colleges and universities. Below is an unpacking of the conceptual framework which allows us to examine how, and in what ways, a prominent public university embodies this project.

### **Service Learning and Civic Engagement as Compliance Policing**

The literature on Service Learning and Civic Engagement is as varied in quality as it is voluminous, scholarly, self-serving, thoughtful, hyperbolic, historically-informed and shaped by the exigencies for bureaucratic

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., *The Right Dialectic*.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., *The Right Dialectic*

<sup>8</sup> Lacey and Ilcan, *Partnering the Poor?: A Case-Study of USAID Poverty Reduction Partnerships and Assemblages of the Poor*.

propaganda. Definitions of each term often depend on the variant philosophical underpinnings, either explicitly mined, or, in the more instrumental forms, unreflexively adopted, as part of the symbolic reproduction of reality within organizations.

What is common to all of these forms, however, is the overall and somewhat fitful and frantic project of restructuring public colleges and universities to responsibilize students, staff and faculty as service providers to marginalized populations. Such programs create morally acceptable subjects at a time when fiscal funds for higher education, as a percentage of budgets, is on the decline. At the same time, a variety of public and private sector incentives for facilitating the transfer of the delivery of public services to voluntary agencies and agents is on the increase. *Pace Foucault*, this essay advances the proposition that such off-loading does not merely represent the destatification of public services, the “reverse alchemy” into a pure sphere of Fraternity, as Kruger has claimed. Implemented through a series of governmentalities meant to extend responsabilization governmentalities, service learning and civic engagement initiatives are part of a new and early 21<sup>st</sup> Century form of intensive restatification at a distance. As Nikolas Rose, Jonathan Simon and others have noted, *the recalibration of the objects, actors and techniques for managing populations have extended the reach of the state*, through the implementation of new regimes of detail, by acting on intermediate actors, who then are incentivized to act on specific populations. In an interview in *Foucault Studies*, Jacques Donzelot encapsulated some of the main themes of this form of social control:

This extension [replaces] direct [State-centered control] ... with a form of government at a distance . . . [Governmental] destatification . . . goes in hand with the appearance of social technologies which delegate responsibility for individuals to other autonomous entities: enterprises, communities, professional organizations, individuals themselves. Contractual ... objectives, measures of performance, combined with local autonomy, allow this shift of responsibility ...<sup>9</sup>

Writing about the behemoth Los Angeles Unified School District, Torin Mohanan dubbed this phenomenon as “fragmented centralization:”

[In] *fragmented centralization* ... decision-making authority is ... more centralized while accountability for centrally made decisions is ... more

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<sup>9</sup> Donzelot, *Governing Liberal Societies-the Foucault Effect in the English Speaking World*, 54.

distributed down the hierarchy ... This ... simultaneously decreases worker autonomy while intensifying workloads ... Centralization is now a stealth endeavor hidden in the seemingly apolitical settings of specifications and standards while risk and responsibility are fragmented and copiously distributed to those on multiple peripheries ... ”<sup>10</sup>

The key point is this: The moral, surveillance and economic productivity imperatives routinely embodied by civic engagement and service learning initiatives track closely with technologically intensive and prudentialist forms of social control. Concerned with institutionalizing political, moral and economic discourses and practices that legitimate and responsabilize “the faithful and prudent neo-liberal citizen/consumer/parishioner,” these initiatives embody three broad functions, developed here as an extension of Foucault’s 1979 Tanner-Stanford lectures.<sup>11</sup>

1. (The Shepherd) Moral prescription, exhortation and continuous surveillance of all and each, disseminated via political, governmental, educational, religious and familial venues, coupled with institutionally defined-and-symbolically enforced behavioral rewards and exclusions;

2. (The Marketer) Intensive intra-institutional practices of “branding” and “relationship marketing” that utilize the data collecting and datamining products of these shepherding and actuarial regimes, for the purposes of positive “branding” of institutions, linking the brand with notions of trust, and “the Good,” and the Self. The narratives are specifically framed for recruitment, “special client-institutional” identity-formation, and ultimately, for the capture of funds, via bequests, endowments and other forms of material and symbolic acquisition.

3. (The Actuary) Continuous probabilistic risk assessments of populations, with the data net for such calculations embedded into routine, detailed and mobile recording of mundane transactional exchange, based on broadly dispersed and assembled forms of visual, biometric, transactional data, all intensively datamined.

In sum, this trinity encapsulates *bona fide* meta-functions that “shape the conduct of conduct,” in a new, sweeping definition of policing via intensified compliance mechanisms. Viewed from a genealogical perspective, the prototype for these new governmentality functions is found in Foucault’s discussion of the problematics of 18<sup>th</sup> Century Germanic Cameralism. In response to economic and legitimacy crises in

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<sup>10</sup> Monahan, *Globalization, Technological Change and Public Education*, 94, 106.

<sup>11</sup> Foucault, *Pastoral Power and Political Reason* in *Carriere*, 135-152.

Germanic principates, Cameralists developed a governance program called *Polizeiwissenschaft*. The term is broad, encompassing policy and policing functions. In *The Foucault Effect*, Colin Gordon, citing Foucault, conveyed the comprehensive ambition of the *Polizeiwissenschaft* enterprise. A reshuffling of Gordon's efforts is below:

Life is the object of police: the indispensable, the useful, and the superfluous ... Police 'sees to living;' 'the objects which it embraces are in some sense indefinite ... [The task of] calculating detailed action appropriate to an infinity of unforeseeable and contingent circumstances is met by [the desire to create] an exhaustive detailed knowledge of reality ... Police is a science of endless lists and classifications ... a knowledge of inexhaustibly detailed and continuous control ... a kind of *economic pastorate* of men and things ... where the population is likened to a herd and flock ...<sup>12</sup>

*Polizeiwissenschaft* theorists zeroed in on the administration of populations, in such a way that the management of humans was synonymous with the management of objects. The über trope of *Polizeiwissenschaft* theorists (as it was for Margaret Thatcher, in 1979) was that the good supervision of a home was also an active expression of the principles for effective statecraft, as expressed by Dubber:<sup>13</sup>

There were human resources, and natural resources. The mode of the resource [was inconsequential] ... all resources were [to be deployed to] maximize the welfare of the state-household ... police consists of "the good order and constitution of a state's persons and things ... arranged so as to lead to a convenient end"... In the [proto-] statistical world of population management [that defined 18th Century *Polizeiwissenschaft*, as prescription and practice] police remained rooted in [effective and correct practices of] private [and meticulous] householding [of individuals, goods and finances]<sup>14</sup>

And, as David Burchell notes, the shepherding-function clearly encompassed the production of the moral citizen/subject:

[*Polizeiwissenschaft* regimes] ... aimed at [producing] a concerted ethical and spiritual reformation of the population, as well as of its manners and outward demeanor. Social discipline aimed to instill a new attitude, a new

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<sup>12</sup> Gordon, *Governmentality Rationality: An Introduction*, in *The Foucault Effect*, 10-12.

<sup>13</sup> Dennis, *Policing the Convergence of Virtual and Material Worlds: The True Object of Police is Man, CTHEORY*.

<sup>14</sup> Dubber, cited by Dennis, *ibid*.

style of ethical comportment ...by a closer connection between the moral realm and the life-style of the population... inculcat[ing] social virtues.<sup>15</sup>

As Foucault observed, the master (and historically complex) trope that grounded much of the Polizeiwissenschaft project, and by extension anchors our contemporary techno-iteration, is that of the shepherd-function. As an ideal type, I've produced a truncated and somewhat imaginatively updated, if admittedly partial and contemporary recasting of three interwoven shepherd-functions, derived and adapted from the 1979 Tanner lectures:

### **Table One: Shepherd Functions**

a. The Shepherd exercises power over a flock (internal and external clients) rather than a bounded territory. The Shepherd surveys, regulates and channels internal and external clients into channels that meet the general, if recodeable, economic, political, moral and regulatory goals that constitute the Shepherd-function;

b. The Shepherd-function constitutes internal and external clients (the flock). *Sans* the Shepherd-function, the flock does not exist. In constituting internal and external clients, the Shepherd-function defines the relations between itself and these clients as total dependence of each member of the flock on the Shepherd-function, as embodied in prescribed rituals of continuous and self-produced visibility (via examination,<sup>7</sup> self-examination and public rituals of confession);

c. The Shepherd-function is totally devoted to internal and external clients, unremittingly and continuously watching and assessing the needs and desires of all-and-each, via the digital, biometric, and visual traces of the myriad forms of self-generated data, followed by meta-routines of data collection, data mining and context-specific analysis. To do so, the Shepherd-function installs the hardware and software ensembles to record self-generated tracks and traces of activities, by the members of the flock (internal and external clients), as the Shepherd-function introjects, into all-and-each, a prescriptive self-auditing function.

In a contemporary context, one way to conceptualize this is to note the

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<sup>15</sup> Burchell, cited by Dennis, *ibid*.

sustained push, from for Colleges and Universities across the U.S. to become deeply and permanently "socially embedded," as a result of a slew of service learning and civic engagement vehicles, into the life-worlds of internal and external clients (the flock). By way of illustrating the ambitious scope of these trends, the 2006 Strategic Plan (and ancillary documents) for the U.S.'s largest (in terms of yearly gross enrollment) post-secondary institution, Arizona State University, serves as an ideal type and the logical, institutional and practical terminus for the rhetoric and proposed goals for higher education, over the first decades of the 21st Century. (An initial exposition will be followed by theoretical analysis):

**Embedding the Shepherd, the Actuary and the Marketer:  
the New American University, and the Surveillance-  
Functions of Service Learning and Civic Engagement:**

The Shepherd: In September 2006, the office of ASU President Michael Crow released a comprehensive policy report, assembled by the Oakland, California-based consulting firm Fern Tiger and Associates, detailing the institution's Strategic Plan. Titled "Creating the New American University: A Social Embeddedness Plan for ASU," the center of the plan's five rationalities is the intent to concretize, in institutional practice and identity, this explicitly stated desire:

In the ideal world of some future time, travelers would arrive in the thriving city of Phoenix and its environs and be delighted, and perhaps a bit perplexed, at how difficult it is to tell where ASU [Arizona State University] starts and the community ends. They would not know whether the community is transforming the University or the University is influencing the community. In such a dynamic, creative place, the boundaries and firewalls between institutions and individuals; between theory and action; between university "experts" and community "experience;" will have all but disappeared ... [This vision] serves as inspiration for what can be made possible if the individuals and institutions within a region recognize common needs and dreams, and develop a shared will ...<sup>16</sup>

The endeavor to "socially embed" or integrate ASU [will] ... create enduring, positive change ... for generations to come ....

Some feel that ASU [like Rome and Prussia before it] might be able to do

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<sup>16</sup> Fern Tiger Associates. *Creating the New American University at Arizona State University*, 18.

the heretofore impossible: Bring together the many fragmented communities and municipalities that have emerged in the Valley over the years.<sup>17</sup>

The document goes on to describe the five "integrated actions" of the social embeddedness initiative, three of which bear directly on shepherding and governance of external clients: These three are as follows:

1. Community Capacity Building, enabling community-based organizations and institutions to become strong and effective by providing support, training, and access to resources and information;
2. Economic Development and Investment, responding both to the needs of the university and the communities as ASU pursues its role as an economic engine;
3. Social Development, enhancing the well-being of the diverse communities of Arizona, by working closely with public and private institutions.<sup>18</sup>

To do so requires not only the initial reconstitution and subsequent transformation of external clients (the flock) but the simultaneous political re-education of internal clients (faculty, staff and students), via the orientation of practice and received dogma within Arizona State University. All five "integrated actions" (three of which are noted above) are thematically related to four goals, two of which involve expressions of internal institutional fealty (by the internal clientele of professors, staff and students) to the following:

1. Foster a university-wide culture that embraces responsibility for contributing to positive social change in the community and in the research, teaching and service practices of ASU.
2. Develop internal and external structures and reward systems to encourage and support effective implementation and the long-term sustainability of social embeddedness as a core value for ASU and the greater Phoenix community.<sup>19</sup>

An internal document cited in the Plan is strident, in a quasi-desperate command-and-control sort of way, in demanding that the flock

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 4.



(staff/faculty) deeply internalize and decisively externalize this dogma:

Social embeddedness is a value ... not a list ... not a program ... not a center ... We're ... instilling a value in the faculty and staff, and in the culture of this university ... It's up to everyone ... to think that through and then do something about it.<sup>20</sup>

The Marketer: The Strategic Plan prescribes a plethora of marketing tools in service of selling the message (and prepare the ground for perceptual and behavioral change): The message is that ASU is becoming, should be, and must always henceforth be "a force" that is "socially embedded," deep into the Valley of the Sun. To effect this change, the centerpiece strategy consists of a sustained and multipronged marketing campaign:

A thoughtful "branding" of the concept of social embeddedness will provide a touchstone for the vision the community and the University define together and can serve as a marker linking all programs, activities, related communications materials and other representations of social embeddedness.<sup>21</sup>

A related document includes the charge to integrate the master vision of social embeddedness into the heart of all pedagogy, professors, staff and students. A tiny slice of the overall effort concerns curricular design and delivery. For example, at the bottom of the curriculum stack, there's the required one-credit course of ASU 101, which states as its goals, the following:

Students will learn ... how to best take advantage of all that the New American University has to offer them ... Students will learn ... key design imperatives for ASU, including ... social embeddedness ...<sup>22</sup>

At the middle layer of the curriculum stack, a system of institutional prescriptions, administrative positions and any array of rewards are intended to encourage the dissemination of the motif of social embeddedness across the entirety of the undergraduate curriculum. Currently at the top level of the stack is the suggestion that social embeddedness become a [constituent] component of doctoral programs. This multi-pronged, multi-targeted marketing campaign has one goal, a kind of *de facto* colonization of Maricopa County, as defined by President Crow, in his 2002 inaugural address:

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>22</sup> See ASU 101: <http://asuonline.asu.edu/asu101/index.cfm>

ASU must become ... ubiquitous ... a driving force—in local neighborhoods, in the metropolitan region, and statewide. ASU must become an integral part of the community, and a lifelong presence in the lives of its alumni, as well as the general citizenry. I take it as an article of faith that ASU must become a presence in our local schools ... in our government, museums, cultural institutions, homes, and retirement communities ...<sup>23</sup>

To no small extent, this kind of initiative also can be seen as an example of a specific kind of marketing, relationship marketing. In a 2002 piece, I delineated the tenets of relationship marketing:

Relationship marketing differs from the normal set of good relations companies want to maintain with their suppliers, employees and other stakeholders. It seeks to move ... customers [from] "good relations" into "special relations. . ."

But because not all [clients] are easily enticed into such a status, the need for market segmentation emerges, [in support of relationship marketing] . . .

Market segmentation is a supporting strategy for relationship marketing. When different segments of customers are identified, it follows that the supplier may wish to use different marketing approaches for them ...<sup>24</sup>

This marketing strategy is clearly discernable in the detailed prescriptions of the Strategic Plan. However, shepherding and marketing functions do not exhaust the denotations of the blueprint for "The New American University." In an age of endemic insecurity, the concerns of the plan are folded into the meta-actuarial projects characteristic of Neoliberalism 2.0.

The Actuary: The actuarial function of ASU's New American University project is not unique, and predates, by nearly two decades, the marching orders embedded by this specific initiative: The transference of actuarial functions are part of a macro-social trend where U.S. colleges and universities perform a particular transformational function. Suzan Ilcan and Tanya Basok describe the essentials of these functions below:

[Since] ... the Keynesian era, government[s], [in disinvesting] themselves of the responsibility to meet their citizens' social and economic

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<sup>23</sup> Crow, *A New American University: The New Gold Standard*, 13.

<sup>24</sup> Dennis, citing Tinsley: *Inventing "W," the Presidential Brand: The Rise of QVC Politics*.

requirements ... [have] engaged individuals, private enterprises, and communities to recreate social supports ... Partnerships between the state and the private sector . . . [have] drastically altered ... [Communities and voluntary agencies are now] largely responsible for assisting disadvantaged people ... *Community government* has become an ever expanding political project ... to shape and orient communities [that] responsabilize certain groups of citizens for particular purposes and ends ... by channeling the energies of volunteers into service for individual clients ... [A double responsabilization is created: Invested by government with the task of governing] volunteer agencies provide services to disadvantaged individuals and simultaneously train community members to assume their moral duties [through providing such services].<sup>25</sup>

Collectively, colleges and universities are key social and institutional fulcrums for this *en masse* recoding at the beginning of the 21st Century. Apart from their traditional functions, these institutions are occupied, as matters of morality, economics, political ambition and institutional survival, with the wholesale orientation of a generation of college students, and the reorientation of staff and academics, away from both a Keynesian state-centered welfarist model and the subsequent econometric Neoliberal 1.0 model to the responsabilization practices (moral and actuarial) inherent in the sociocentrism of Neo-Liberalism 2.0. The ASU document recognizes the historical, recent and current reality of most projects of this nature across the North American continent:

Civic responsibility and community engagement are not new concepts ... Hundreds of colleges and universities nationwide boast strategies and programs aimed at improving or enhancing the connections between the university and the community ... [Since the early 1990s] a wide variety of university-based community engagement "experiments" have been undertaken in nearly every major city and at every major university across the country, including ASU ...<sup>26</sup>

The ASU-commissioned survey of more than 75 post-secondary institutions documented a variety of stand-alone or loosely allied efforts at palliative community-partnerships, service learning opportunities, applied urban research projects, etc. ASU's administration found the lack of a holistic and integrated set of strategies (such as the relative inability of these institutions to perform the overarching "stealth centralization" set of controls mentioned by Mohanan) to be an opportunity to rediscipline these

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<sup>25</sup> Ilcan and Basok, *Community Government: Voluntary Agencies, Social Justice, and the Responsibilization of Citizens*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

efforts, in the pursuit of macro-institutional goals of power and influence. The constant is the contingent management of and responsibility for providing services directly to marginalized populations, by responsabilized moral agents, such as high school, college and university students. For example, consider these planks in the campaign platform of then 2008 U.S. Presidential candidate, Barack Obama:

Expand Service-Learning in Our Nation's Schools: Obama ... will set a goal that all middle and high school students do 50 hours of community service a year ... Obama will create energy-focused youth job programs to provide disadvantaged youth with service opportunities weatherizing buildings . . .

Require 100 Hours of Service [per Academic Year] in College: Obama will establish a new American Opportunity Tax Credit that is worth \$4000 a year in exchange for 100 hours of public service, per year ...<sup>27</sup>

Particularly with the latter initiative, the goal is to incentivize and discipline college students, via an econocentric inducement worthy of Neo-Liberalism 1.0, to become the responsabilized socio-centric moral agents needed by Neoliberalism 2.0. Writ large, this is a "bait and switch" maneuver.

At the same time, such shepherding has an elective affinity with the rise of a ubiquitous computing society, where computing, surveillance, tracking and analysis functions disappear into the background detritus of everyday life. (This is the "Everyware" of Adam Greenfield<sup>28</sup>, or Bruce Sterling's "Spime."<sup>29</sup>) These artifacts consist of digital, audio, visual and data traces of mundane transactional data: credit card purchases, debit card transactions, RFID and GPS-enabled tracking devices, from cell phones, to specially enhanced license plates via wireless networks; CCTV and routinized computerized biometric health and security identification, and such ancillary phenomena as the the WalMart and Pentagon-led adoption of RFID inventory controls). All of these will tighten the ability to recognize, commodify and control "at risk" populations, such as ex-felons re-entering U.S. society, as well as keeping tabs on nascent responsabilized clients, such as late adolescent college students, simultaneously and constantly. (These are the modulations, the coils of the serpent of

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<sup>27</sup> Obama, *Barack Obama's and Joe Biden's Plan for Universal Voluntary Public Service*.

<sup>28</sup> Greenfield, *Everyware: The Dawning Age of Ubiquitous Computing*.

<sup>29</sup> Sterling, *Shaping Things*.

continuous control, urgently described by Deleuze, in 1990).<sup>30</sup> The dream of continuous visibility, so well articulated by Bentham, and so central to the political functions of the Shepherd, expands in these new, data-rich, panspectral projects, against the backdrop of structural crisis.

### **Conclusion: The Unspoken Supplements**

By late September, 2008, the outgoing Bush administration sought an additional 700 billion dollars (U.S.) to socialize the costs of an unregulated orgy of "bad" mortgage loans by private brokerage houses and other entities, taking these loans off the ledgers of large financial players. That request is but the latest in a staggeringly long and deep string of ongoing U.S. debt accumulation. For example, these numbers, as impressive as they are, do not include the 200 billion in federal dollars that collateralized and socialized the U.S.'s two largest mortgage companies, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, in the Summer of 2008. These numbers do not take into the account the 500 billion dollars in losses proximately incurred in the mortgage and derivative-fueled meltdown, nor does it account for the still accumulating debt of more than two billion dollars a day, approximately 735 billion dollars per year, that the U.S. has borrowed, yearly, ~~s~~, as the behemoth debt-bloated nation-state staggers toward the end of the first decade of the 21st Century, mired in quasi-Depression economic spiral A substantial portion of that accrued debt funds an occupation of Iraq routinely understood as an activity of dubious utility and convoluted morality. Additionally, these figures do not include the annual interest payment to service this burgeoning fiscal debt, at more than 400 billion dollars per year, in 2008. Finally, these figures do not include the underfunded and imminently due Social Security and Medicare set of social benefits.<sup>31</sup> Arguably, the politics of maintaining these entitlements, for a generation of Baby Boomers, against a deteriorating fiscal and structural economic backdrop, a backdrop which fuels a declining sense of social and physical security, sets the stage for urgent strategies of contemporary actuarial and moral forms of responsabilization. How ironic and necessary such strategies seem, when viewed at a distance.

On the one hand, such intensive sociocentric and sociometric shepherding and ersatz partnership prescriptions, prescriptions that are typical expressions of Neoliberalism 2.0, at colleges and universities, proclaimed

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<sup>30</sup> Deleuze. *Postscript to Societies of Control*.

<sup>31</sup> Crutsinger, *Economists See Financial Bailout as Necessary*.

under the standard of Fraternity (social justice redefined as social density), and concerned with maintaining social order in an era of structural economic and social decline, seem, when viewed in one aspect, a pragmatic and rational propping up of the provision of services for the marginalized and provisionally disqualified. Some sense of the public good, and of an unqualified giving is both necessary and inevitable, given the ravaged state of public finances. To paraphrase Ted Kennedy's concession speech at the 1980 Democratic National Convention: The needs of the marginalized remain, the pain endures, and hope flickers on.

On the other hand, such prescriptions for moral investment and sweat equity in the lives of the marginal, so solemnly propagated by political and cultural leaders, as well as the bureaucratic rank-and-file of the Baby Boom generation, seem, when taken as a whole, self-serving, dishonest and even parasitical. During the initial generational hegemony of the Boomers, a period where Neoliberalism 1.0 held sway (1979-2004), what should have been investments in the future were deferred, and, instead, an orgy of consumption ensued, maintaining an ephemeral present through the accumulation of debt, by members of the downwardly mobile middle class and the nouveau riche, venture capitalists of Silicon Valley and Wall Street. This was a period where the financialization of the U.S. economy more than tripled (from six to twenty one percent of the total economic pie), as productive activity gave way to compulsive levels of asset "flipping."

Informed by history, a cynical gaze at emerging responsabilization and shepherding projects might well find the moral tone of responsabilization, as a general matter, hypocritical and self-serving. Arguably, this self-congratulatory generation of Baby Boomers, having consumed the resources and the legacy that rightfully belonged to subsequent generations, now seeks to maintain its entitlements, which include a baseline of social stability, by having subsequent generations not only pay off the deferred and still accruing debt, but also assume moral responsibility and extra-governmental control (and risk) for the direct supervision of marginalized populations. Post-Baby Boom generations must be convincingly persuaded to have less (and feel very good about it) and to give more and to pay more, for less. And they must do this even while their predecessors continue to raid the generational treasury, on extended life-support, ensconced in their homes, as octo-and-nonagenarians—a generation maintained, by cybernetic assisted-living technologies, as geriatric cyborgs, extending the end and the expense of

the Baby Boomer generational lifecycle.

Not surprisingly, then, from the prison to the halfway house and from the school to the nursing home, there's an intensification of political reason embodied by a complex and technologically-embued shepherding. It's a shepherding that reconstitutes the flock as responsabilized service providers and moral subjects (post-Baby Boomers) or, for the marginal so surveilled, as provisionally requalified members of the social corpus. It's a shepherding that develops sophisticated ubiquitous computing to extend the range of observation of and knowledge about the flock, while dissolving awareness of such surveillance through smart design. Concurrently, there's a market-based shepherding that sells, in the case of Arizona State, an educationally-packaged shepherding that introjects a project of *de facto* political colonization, seeking to embed itself deep into all vectors of the body social and cultural, via service-learning and civic engagement initiatives. There's an intensive moral shepherding that uses the notion of an idealized, apolitical community to silence acts of intellectual courage and much needed dissent, long the domain of intellectuals, in the name of a new triumph of the will; the uncontested common good of the community, the unproblematically constituted *Volk*. All these master tropes and functions of the Shepherd, the Marketer and the Actuary are a profane but prolific epiphenomena, part of a neo-Polizeiwissenschaft governmentality formation; a technologically-enhanced, ubiquitous computing-enabled intensification of surveillance for purposes of moral and actuarial qualification and disqualification. Props in our growing fascination with Security Theater, the Shepherd, the Marketer and the Actuary will be very much with us during the decline ahead, these three *Geists*, these iterations of our own Biblical Leviathans, indifferently tossing us across a ceaseless, thrashing Sea of Chaos.

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# DISCIPLINE-SOVEREIGNTY-EDUCATION

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Now more than ever, Michel Foucault is a major presence in the field of educational studies. His work has been utilized to rethink adult/child relationships (Naughton 2005), to interrogate constructions of subjectivity and truth in educational practices (Besley and Peters 2007), and to problematize liberal theories of autonomy (Marshall 1996). While these books and countless journal articles on Foucault have complicated and extended his genealogical projects, there is nevertheless a critical failure on the part of Foucauldian education scholars to understand the relationship between disciplinary power in schools and sovereign force. The following analysis will demonstrate that the existing educational literature has not yet fully examined the internal relationship between discipline and force and as such has missed how sovereignty supplements discipline and discipline furthers sovereignty in the classroom—thus producing a complex assemblage between discipline-sovereignty-education. In order to understand the persistent life of sovereign force within schools, we must rethink (a) the gaze of power, (b) the subject of power, and (c) the spatial location of power. Through this analysis, I will demonstrate the need for a theory of “necropedagogy” or a pedagogy that promotes a certain form of educational extinction or disqualification according to a sovereign ban.

To begin I would like to offer a basic overview of Foucault’s genealogical analysis of power. According to Foucault, the ostentatious display of sovereign authority through the spectacle of the scaffold was displaced in the modern era by the subtle logic of a disciplinary regime necessary for the management of a docile yet productive and competent social body. Within the economic conditions of capitalist production and the boundaries of the nation-state, power’s highest function ceased to be execution and became the regulation of life functions (Foucault 1990). Rather than displaying itself through spectacular and irrational eruptions of public torture according to a sovereign’s decision, disciplinary power came to function covertly through largely transparent and seemingly

invisible channels. Today disciplinary power is, according to this line of argument, institutionalized through schools, hospitals, asylums, factories, and prisons, all of which act as conduits for maintaining the health, security, and prosperity of the nation. Dispersed throughout these various institutions are a variety of disciplinary mechanisms, each of which “differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes,” and “normalizes” (Foucault 1979, 183). The resulting “social orthopedics” of education ceases to punish individual infractions and instead focuses on “correcting their potentialities” (Foucault 2000, 57). Thus in terms of schooling, hierarchical observation (enabling the gaze of administration and performance qualification on state and federal levels access to the practices of teachers and students), normalizing judgment (in which students are ranked in terms of their perceived abilities and rewarded for their disciplined behaviors), and examinations (that articulate hierarchical observation with normalization in the form of intellectual, physical, and psychological tests) become pervasive techniques to manage various potentialities in children. In all such cases, disciplinary power is, as Foucault observes “exercised through its invisibility... and the examination is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of its potency, instead of imposing its mark on its subjects, holds them in a mechanism of objectification” (Foucault 1979, 187). In other words, in schools, power shifts from erratic displays of public punishment over and against educational life (humiliation, expulsion, etc.) to internal regulation concerned with reforming individual behaviors through proper training, protecting individual lives through investment, and optimizing efficiency. Thus the very invisibility of disciplinary power is its greatest asset, producing intricate effects with only a minimum of exertion in the classroom. In sum, the training of the body makes forms of direct coercion unnecessary and increasingly infrequent. Subjects are formed through their subjugation to an objectifying apparatus in which their individuality is constructed, secured, and fastened without conscious awareness.

On the macro-level of the population, these micro-rituals of power that discipline and individuate bodies congeal into a philosophy of biopower wherein the management of the health of the nation becomes the principle problematic of the modern world (Foucault 1990). Here bodies are transformed into statistics for the measurement of birth rates, migration statistics, consumption and production capabilities, and death rates in the form of censuses, surveys, and other quantitative tools of population measurement and calculation. Thus, disciplinary regimes function to correct and to regulate individual “free citizens” with rights while

biopower manages a collective population on a macro-level. Two “series” are created: body-organism-discipline-institutions and population-biological processes-regulatory mechanisms-State (Foucault 2003, 250). The element or category that unites and separates these two series (and thus allows biopower to pass into the disciplinary and vice versa) is the norm which “can be applied to both a body one wishes to discipline and a population one wishes to regularize” (Foucault 2003, 253). In other words, biopower distributes disciplined bodies around normalities (in education, industry, politics, etc.) and in the process constitutes politics as immanent to life itself.

Overwhelmingly, Foucauldian scholars have focused on schools as disciplinary institutions. David Kirk (2004) for instance argues that the shift from drilling and exercise to sports and games in physical education indicates a movement within biopower from an externally regulative source (the instructor) to a more subtle form of internal regulation through which students as players organize their own bodies and actions according to the rules of the game. Here, Kirk emphasizes how biopower—as a power interested in the health of the individual in relation to the overall health of the population—increasingly has refined its methods of deployment and organization through education.

Yet this emphasis on disciplinary power and its ability to train, homogenize, and invest in the body/mind of the student through subtle mechanisms does not adequately describe other forms of classroom interaction. Ray Rist’s (1973) classic ethnographic depiction of tracking in an urban kindergarten offers an empirical depiction of abandonment that does not fit easily into the narrative of disciplinary investment. Through classroom observations, Rist realized that teachers were creating student subgroups based largely on the physical appearances of the students. Those with darker skin, who wore “dirty” or untidy clothes, and who perhaps smelled as if they had not taken a bath in several days were clearly segregated from the rest of the class and placed in the back. These decisions were made almost instantaneously by teachers and had far-reaching effects, determining a student’s overall academic standing before the student was even able to perform. Importantly, these students are rendered invisible by such a process, ignored in the classroom, and as Rist points out, excluded while nevertheless remaining within the school.

On the surface, such tracking procedures might seem like typical examples of Foucault’s description of hierarchical observation found in disciplinary

regimes. “Hierarchical surveillance,” for Foucault, produces enclosed spaces that “act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them” and to make them more efficient, orderly, and internally disciplining (1979, 172). Yet what Rist describes is a hierarchy that produces zones of pedagogical indifference and institutional invisibility. As Rist depicts, even the special services offered to these groups of poor minority students are characterized by a certain level of indifference or coercive callousness that does not speak to Foucault’s disciplinary model of social investment. Here there is no disciplinary rehabilitation through the micro-management of student potentialities but rather an untimely educational abandonment that, as statistics now demonstrate, leads to high drop-out rates, expulsions, jobless futures, and various subaltern lifestyles outside of dominant disciplinary institutions. There is a violence at work here which is not captured by the discourse of micro-management that dominates educational literature. It is a violence of exclusion, an exceptional violence that does not weave students into a matrix of disciplinary power so much as make them bear witness to a power that judges them from the outside and above.

It is my contention that we need a new descriptive language to capture the full uniqueness of what Rist describes. In order to achieve this goal, we have to look back toward a theory of sovereign force, which, as we will see, maintains itself within disciplinary apparatuses as a disavowed anchoring point. Moving toward a language of sovereign force might seem counter intuitive to Foucauldian inspired educational theorists. In the literature cited above, sovereignty is more often than not described as an anachronism in two senses. Theoretically, sovereignty restricts our analysis of power to a reductive legalistic framework often associated with a critique of the oppressive state. It also focuses on questions regarding who has power rather than how power operates, its techniques, and its technologies. Phenomenologically, it is incapable of describing the reality of power relations existing in the modern world as they are distributed in networks that function continuously, silently, invisibly, and ubiquitously. As such we cannot dwell on questions of sovereignty but rather must refocus attention on the micro-physics of disciplinary power. This shift does not mean that sovereign force no longer operates in schools; it simply means that its functioning is increasingly peripheral to the daily routines of education. For instance Roger Deacon’s in-depth analysis of Foucault’s theory of education states that coercive power relations “still have their place” in modern schooling, but have been largely replaced by subtler

forms of disciplinary training and “moral orthopedics” (2005, 90). Likewise Robin Usher and Richard Edwards argue that “effective learning, the training of the body and soul, renders unnecessary the requirement for more direct forms of coercion, although these forms never entirely disappear” (1994, 100). Sovereign force remains at sites where disciplinary normalization seems to break down. Key here is that sovereign force does not form a necessary category within an analysis of disciplinary power. It remains a left over, a shadow that haunts disciplinary power from the outside. Because sovereign force appears to be an anachronism in present day schooling, ethical analyses of Foucault in education speak to resistance against disciplinary normalization and to the production of contra-conduct rather than rebellion against overt forms of violence and or authority (Pignatelli 1993; 2002).

At the same time, Foucault’s lectures have emphasized that while the modern world might be dominated by a disciplinary paradigm on an institutional level, on the level of the health of the population, on the level of biopower, sovereign force is far from a peripheral issue and in fact returns in the form of genocide against the “other” as biological threat (Foucault 2003). As opposed to the above-mentioned studies, noted educational philosopher John Covalleskie has argued that sovereign force is a *central* issue for educational philosophy (1993), thus opening up a line of investigation that enables us to reassess the internal role of sovereign force in modern schooling. In fact, for Covalleskie, the figure of the teacher is one of the very last outposts for sovereign force in the modern world. While schools might be disciplinary institutions, the force that teachers wield over their students is a form of power sharing many qualities with classical notions of sovereignty: it is inconsistent, not regular; often overt, not subtle; visible, not invisible; vengeful, not indifferent. Because disciplinary power is diffuse, invisible, and ubiquitous it is difficult to resist, yet as Covalleskie points out, the sovereign force of the teacher is often a central catalyst for student resistance. Such resistance then provides the institutional motor for then re-inscribing students into an expanding disciplinary regime. Thus, sovereign force is not simply a marginal anachronism existing only when disciplinary mechanisms falter. It is rather a constitutive aspect of schooling (as both an institution and as a set of social relations within the classroom) with intimate ties to the extension and proliferation of disciplinary mechanisms. In relation to the politics of policy implementation in higher education, theorists such as Maarten Simons (2006) have argued that the European initiative “life long learning” has the very real potential to shift from a form of self-

government into a form of sovereign decision to let die or make live. Drawing on Foucault's later biopolitical lectures and recent scholarship by Giorgio Agamben, Simons correctly pinpoints the persistence of sovereign force within the biopolitical state. From the now pervasive logic of neo-liberal, entrepreneurial ideology, the state invests in what will produce a viable and strategic outcome. Here learning becomes an investment in life, thus capitalizing learning within an overall "vital-economy." "If," as Simons states, "the expectation of possible incomes disappears, their [youth] very real existence and survival is at stake" (2006, 535-36). The sovereign decision is in other words a decision based on a cost-benefits analysis concerning long-term social payoffs of educating certain bodies over and against others. The economic calculus that functions within the biopower of the state acts as the sovereign determinate indicating which bodies have become socially superfluous. Thus, social abandonment lies at the very heart of the logic of social investment and a governmental logic of self-regulation.

In sum, both Covalleskie and Simons suggest that an analysis of the relation between the educator and sovereign force is still necessary; only now the sovereign's claim over life has been transformed into a biopolitical claim concerning the nature of the individual subject and his or her productive role in relation to the health and prosperity of the population. Yet questions still remain. For instance, Covalleskie and Simons remain silent on major issues concerning the relation between this power over death and race and class. Which bodies are subjected to the sovereign ban and how is this related to a racialized notion of the "entrepreneurial self"? Secondly, there is a question of the exact relation between the production of self-regulating subjects and the production of the sovereign ban. In Covalleskie's argument, the sovereign decision reinforces disciplinary modes of power, enabling new lines of discipline to penetrate, describe, and control socially disruptive behaviors. In Simons' case, he argues that the production of "bare life" via the sovereign decision to let die is *the* principle political object within biopolitics, yet he does not adequately analyze what role this object plays within an entrepreneurial, neo-liberal economy. Is the body simply the waste of an investment paradigm or does it serve a structural function as waste?

Here we have to reopen the question of sovereignty via Agamben's theory of exceptionality (1998). For Agamben, sovereignty maintains its functioning within the modern era by producing a biopolitical body that includes life within itself through its exclusion. Biopolitics is thus at its

most foundational moment grounded in a form of violence whereby life is exposed to the logic of the sovereign ban. Bare life is natural life (*zoe*) that has been banned, or rather politicized by a sovereign decision, and it is this form of life—stripped of civil rights and social investment—that forms the premiere political object of biopower. The space of bare life is, as Agamben argues “a no man’s land between a process of subjectivation and a process of desubjectivation, between identity and nonidentity” (Agamben 2004, 117). This is a space of pure survival without the supplement of *bios*. Thus bare life is a paradoxical location betwixt and between the inside and outside of the state, lacking the security of rights or legal processes and devoid of the investment of a normalizing, disciplining apparatus. It is a space of irrational excess based on a sovereign decision outside the law yet founding the law.

Here we can return to my example from Rist’s ethnography of educational abandonment. The students were made subject to a decision that rested solely on a teacher’s irrational judgment concerning a student’s aptitude based on his or her physical appearance. Educational life thus is held in suspension as an exception by a teacher acting as a sovereign judge over and against the student. These students then cease to be active members of the classroom and instead form a silent backdrop against which the ritual of normalization can commence. They are externally included, or, as Michelle Fine argues, they become the educational “disappeared” (1991, 24). These children are not examples (which are “exclusive inclusions” [Agamben 1998, 22] held to be paradigmatic cases of proper or improper action for a disciplinary regime) but are exceptions (“included exclusions”) who are shunned, told to be quiet, and to behave themselves so that the rest of the class can get onto the business of learning and teaching without unnecessary distractions. In other words, the student is rendered “uneducatable” and thus outside the field of normalization.

What we see at work here is a form of necroschooling. This term is an adaptation of Achille Mbembe’s term necropolitics (2003), which suggests that the function of politics today is no longer purely to regulate and invest in *bios* (political life) but rather to reduce *bios* to inhuman life through a power of death. It is also a term that draws upon Paulo Freire’s observation that the pedagogy of oppression is itself necrophylic, or in love with death rather than biophylic or in love with life (2000, 77). Such a necropower does not simply imply biological or actual death (although in its most extreme forms, massacre is certainly its final *telos*), but can include forms of social death wherein a productive civic identity is



withheld from the subject. Necroschooling is a form of education that is more concerned with abandonment than with social investment, protection, etc. It reveals that at the heart of technologies of biopower lies an obscene sovereign decision that is predicated on a fundamental ban that separates the social from itself, creating an internal division that does not operate in terms of hierarchical normalization or examination. In order to fill out the specificities of necroschooling, I will now describe the mechanisms underlying the force of abandonment.

First, the gaze of necropedagogy has its origins in the long history relating education and medicalization (Lewis 2006). Just as the clinical gaze understands life only in relation to the corpse as reference (Foucault 1994) so too the normalizing gaze of education only understands knowledge in relation to ignorance/stupidity. Thus the gazes of medicine and pedagogy are structurally similar, knowing the healthy through the referent of the sick and smart through the referent of the ignorant. Throughout the history of schooling in the U.S. (see in particular the history of educational eugenics [Selden 1999]) these two gazes have repeatedly conjoined to monitor and inspect the student as (potential) biological/intellectual *corpse*—thus linking eugenics with Freire’s pedagogy of oppression as a necrophylic pedagogy obsessed with death. As such, the history of biopower and its internal relation to necropower are intimately linked through the *macabre* gaze of deficit thinking. This macabre gaze is certainly at work in Rist’s classroom described above. For Rist, external markers of poverty are transformed into internal markers of degeneracy, thus creating a depth of field for the macabre gaze to penetrate into the interior psychology of the child in order to render that child pathologically unacceptable and thus educationally invisible.

It is in the macabre gaze of necropedagogy that a critical distinction becomes clear. While Foucault’s analysis of disciplinary power examines the technologies that produce and sustain the dialectic of the normal and the abnormal, the gaze of necropower ultimately distinguishes a different object entirely: the abject. The abject is not simply the extreme of the abnormal but rather falls outside the scope of the normalizing “bell curve.” As Joy James (1996) argues in her criticism of Foucault’s color blindness, the abject body is a racialized body that cannot be normalized through disciplinary apparatuses but is at the outset deemed unfit and thus given over to the field of necropower. I would press her argument even further and suggest that the “health” of the normalized population (white, middle-class, etc.) is in fact sustained by the production of this abject for it is the

foreclosure of abjection that sets the parameters of the field of the normal and the abnormal. Thus the racialized other as deficit is not simply a body that is abnormal (and thus capable of normalization) but a discounted body exposed to necropower as a power over whose life can and cannot be educated. It is this body that is marked for a certain form of social disqualification from the active life of the citizen subject—a body that ironically is forced to survive as a social corpse neither inside nor outside. This is not a subject that acts to further expand disciplinary mechanisms (as in Covalleskie's model), nor is it simply a surplus (as in Simons's analysis). Rather the life of the student subjected to necropedagogy is the excluded ground for defining the normalized, docile, disciplined body.

Thus, it is important to remember that for Foucault there are two types of disciplinary technologies. The first is perhaps the most widely commented upon: the panopticon. The goal of the panopticon is to “improve the exercise of power by making it lighter, more rapid, more effective, a design of subtle coercion for a society to come” (1979, 209). The panopticon renders all actions and behaviors visible through examination, careful cataloging, and recording so as to normalize and homogenize the subject. The other image of discipline is the “discipline-blockade” which is an “enclosed institution, established on the edges of society, turned inwards towards negative functions: arresting evil, breaking communications, suspending time” (1979, 209). Stated differently, Foucault's distinction between 18<sup>th</sup> century institutions which “reinforce marginality” and 19<sup>th</sup> century institutions which “aimed at inclusion and normalization” (2000, 79) seems to have reversed itself in relation to those schools that serve low income, minority students. Here urban schools such as those described by Rist appear to resemble the discipline-blockade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century; as I am arguing, this image of a negative institution forms the proper genealogical paradigm for understanding abjection in the deficit classroom.

Agamben's work pushes us even further and suggests that schools serve as a particular kind of disciplinary-blockade: the concentration camp. According to Agamben (1998), it is the camp that has replaced the panopticon as the paradigm of late capitalism, exposing all life to the sovereign ban. In the camp there is a direct and unmediated relation between politics and life. While it might seem outrageous to suggest that certain schools, such as those described by Rist, exist in the hazy realm between panoptic spaces of disciplinary power and camp-like spaces of sovereign force, there are educational theorists who have made similar

connections. For instance, the radical educational theorist Ivan Illich once argued that schools serving low-income minority populations function as concentration camps. Reflecting on Chicago schools and horrors of 20<sup>th</sup> century technologies of warfare and inhuman bureaucratization, Illich provocatively posed a challenging analogy:

I had come to Chicago to speak about schools, not camps. My theme was educational crippling, not Nazi murder. But I found myself unable to distinguish between Oskar Schindler in his factory in Crakow and Doc Thomas McDonald in Chicago's Goudy Elementary, where he is the principal. I know Doc as indirectly as Schindler, I know him only from the Chicago Tribune, but I cannot forget him. And for some weeks now I have asked myself: Why does he stay on the job? What gives him the courage?

In a sense there is no way of comparing the class of historical events that go under the name of Hiroshima, Pol Pot Cambodia, Armenian Massacre, Nazi Holocaust, ABCstocks, or human genome engineering on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the treatment meted out to people in our schoolrooms, hospital wards, slums, or welfare. But, in another sense, both kinds of horrors are manifestations of the same epochal spirit. We need the courage and the discipline of heart and mind to let these two classes of phenomena interpret each other. (Illich 1988)

Here Illich clearly recognizes both the danger in making an analogy between schools and concentration camps and the necessity of thinking through these links (no matter how mediated) for understanding the pedagogical logic of late capitalism. It is through Agamben's work that we can give conceptual clarity to Illich's intuitive analogy, for it is in the school as a camp-like disciplinary blockade the abandonment becomes a reality for many poor, minority students.

To summarize, we can now formulate the exact differences between disciplinary power and sovereign force in relation to three questions:

- a) What is the gaze of sovereign violence?
- b) What is the object produced through sovereign punishment?
- c) What is the educational space of sovereign force?

Distinct from Foucault's analysis of discipline (whose gaze is normalizing, whose object is the self-regulating subject, and whose space is panoptic) I propose a completely new set of terms that are necessary in order to understand educational sovereignty. Here the gaze is the gaze of macabre abandonment, the object produced is not an object at all but rather the subject (neither inside nor outside the school, locked in the zone of

indifference), and the space of necropedagogy verges dangerously close to that of the camp.

Yet all is not lost in contemporary schooling. While this is largely a dystopian picture—illustrating as it does the inherent connections between discipline-sovereignty-education—we must nevertheless ask: What are alternatives to bioschooling? While Foucault argued there is no outside of power, this observation (taken to be pessimistic and anti-utopian) does not mean that there is no outside to biopower (with its normalizing and disciplining processes) and its relation to necropower (with its sovereign decision over life). The short-circuiting of biopower in education does not mean that schooling ceases to be “dangerous” in a Foucauldian sense, but rather that the dangers are reoriented toward the responsibility for producing a new notion and practice of freedom. In other words, the dangers shift toward the possibility of an event that could open up a new form of educational power beyond the limits of the present. Such an event remains within the framework of discipline-sovereignty-education but transforms the set of immanent relations through a negation of the negation of the sovereign ban.

Perhaps resources for this concept can be found within Jacques Ranciere’s educational text *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991). Here Ranciere refutes the macabre gaze of necropedagogy and the disciplining gaze of the panopticon while at the same retaining a theory of sovereignty operating within knowledge. Ranciere recognizes the ability of students to learn autonomously without explication by a sovereign and without constructing a hierarchy of intelligence predicated on abjection. “Universal teaching” happens each time an individual constitutes knowledge without reliance on the expert. In this model, the teacher verifies not knowledge but the extension of will to the act of learning. Ranciere recognizes that teaching is the orientation of constitutive power to the riddle of knowledge. Ranciere also adds a challenge to the theory of sovereignty thus far developed. For Ranciere, the sovereignty of the teacher can be detached from necropower and redeployed in terms of emancipation. Thus the teacher as master can hail the student and give him/her a mandate by saying “You can learn; you are intelligent.” This is a schoolmaster that does not know, that has nothing to teach; his or her only gift is in the form of a sovereign demand (a hailing of the student as student) that all students express their intelligence equally through the concentration of their constitutive powers. This is a *master without mastery* that produces a subject beyond *subjugation* or *abandonment*. It is a radical form of

educational equality that does not produce a count in relation to the discounted and thus draws a line between itself and the logic of the ban.

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**SECTION V:**  
**GOVERNING NATIONAL POPULATIONS**



# DISCIPLINING THE OTHER: GENEALOGICAL INSIGHTS TO THE GOVERNANCE OF THE ROMA IN FINLAND

MIIKKA PYYKKÖNEN

Our gypsies are easily distinguished from the rest of us: [...] Their lifestyle is based on vagabondism, lying, cheating, fortune-telling, stealing, and mugging. [...] Gypsies have little or no knowledge about the religious issues. [...] They do not even know how to read. Only those of them who have been dealing a lot with priests do remember how to say the Lord's Prayer. They never go to church. Therefore, it is no wonder that they do not have morals or ethics at all, and they fall into rough extremities and vices. [...] Their godless lifestyle shows us how important it is to force these people to settle in one location, so that they could be evangelized into Christianity and educated in religious manners in the same way as the Lappish and other pagans. The result of this would be them turning into useful workers and docile and virtuous members of the society, which now has to tolerate them for its own bad.

—Ganander, 1780: §13, §15, §17, §21, translation MP

## **Introduction**

In so-called post-Foucauldian research, genealogy has been used in analyzing the formation of poverty (Dean, 1992), unemployment (Walters, 2000), insurance (Ewald, 1991), motherhood (Helén, 1997), and addiction (Valverde, 1998), for instance. Foucault (1977b; 1986; 1987; 1990; 1991a) used the genealogical method to describe continuations and outages of penal order, sexuality, and regimes of power. Genealogy does not only lead the analyst to describe the development of the particular historical practices meticulously, but to show how these practices and their subjects relate to governance and knowledge production.

In this article, I introduce the basic “genealogical toolkit” in the framework of the governance of the Roma in Finland. This toolkit consists

of the following concepts: event, descent, emergence, problematization, ethos, and practice. I explain these terms and concepts in the next section. After this, I briefly introduce the history of the Roma in Finland and analyze more specifically two events in their governance: the Hanging Law (1637) and Walle's Committee (1898). Through approaching these cases, I demonstrate how the aforementioned concepts can be used. The observation of these two cases show that in every event some particular forms of subjectivities intertwine with the new forms of governing technologies and modes of knowledge production. I do not only want to observe changes in administration and governance, but also the transformations in the forms of subjectivities that administration is trying to enhance or restrict among the Roma.

### **Genealogical method**

Following Foucault (1991b; 1977a) and several "Foucauldians" (e.g. Dean, 1992 and 1998; Helén, 2005), genealogy can be referred to as the historical analytics of power. The following are interrelated premises of genealogical research: (i) things and phenomena do not have timeless essence. Instead of searching for the origin of things, the genealogist aims at analyzing the ways in which things are represented and become known as natural, inevitable, and true in specific contexts. This process aims at problematizing the matters of courses. The development of every process of "naturalization" and "objectification" is an empirical question for the genealogist. Therefore, (ii) genealogy is a matter of writing "effective historiography." Effective historiography emphasizes the search for discontinuities, because historical knowledge is always multi-ingredient and contradictory, and not complete or definitive by its nature. (iii) Genealogy is a study of repression and dominance. It aims at showing how many of the present well-meaning practices and institutions—such as the educational system, economy, and social policy—are based at least partially on violence, dominance, and control. This relates to the objective of a search for counter-memory; genealogy aims at raising alternative and forgotten practices and turns of history into sight.

The genealogist observes the relation of individuals and populations to truth (the question of the knowing subject), to power (the question of the active subject), and to ethics (the question of the moral subject). In regard to these matters, the following questions are subsequently asked: which knowledge formations affect the construction of subject(ivities)? In which power relations does the subject act and constitute itself? How does the

subject act morally and how is this behavior conducted? (Foucault, 1987: 3-13).

Genealogy as a research method intertwines with the “archaeology” (Foucault, 1972). Whereas the archaeology systematically decrypts self-evidences of truth-discourses, the genealogist analyzes those discursive contents by connecting them to practices and historical (dis)continuities. Genealogy studies how, why, and when regimes of truths and regimes of practices intertwine, and how they descend from the previous truths, practices, events, and their problematizations (Dean, 1992: 215-219; Foucault, 1977a). In this article, I study how historical truth-discourses and practices of government intertwine in the case of the Roma in Finland from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The first concept of the genealogical toolkit that I use in my study is the *event* and its variation, *eventalization* (Foucault, 1991b). “Event” means a juncture or a break where something new emerges to a particular socio-historical context in an influential way. Events are not necessarily radical changes with direct and explicit social impacts, and for this reason, they are often hard to recognize. If anything, the question at hand regarding events concerns the genealogist’s ability to recognize these changes in time and space through fastidious analysis of different kinds of data. This is the core of the eventalization through which the genealogist tries to understand every event or series of events in its singularity; in eventalization, the genealogist tries to find many explanatory factors and terms for the formation of the studied event. (Dean, 1992: 216; Foucault, 1991b: 76-78; Veyne, 1996: 147).

One of the main sub-concepts of the event/eventalization is *descent*. To observe “descending” is to analyze through which kinds of historical transformations and rewriting processes things become understood in the way(s) they are understood at a particular point in history. Analysis of descending means to follow continuums and breaks in historical processes, observation of transformations and substitutions between present and past discourses, practices, strategies, problematizations, and so forth. A closely related concept is that of *emergence*. The analysis of the “emergence” of an event focuses on power/knowledge at a particular moment and in a particular space in history: a singular event emerges as the impact of relations and actions of particular knowledge production and governmental practices. If the study of descending clarifies the historical line and processes in the background of an event, the study of emergence clarifies

the actual context in which the event takes place. (Dean, 1992: 216; Foucault, 1977a: 146-151; Helén, 2005: 98).

One of the key concepts of the genealogical study is also *problematization*. Problematizations are posed by administrators, spiritual and religious leaders, experts such as scientists, and, nowadays, increasingly by citizens and their consortiums. Problematizations question the existing behavior and ways of life of the people or some rationality or technology of governance, and they are eminent in the descending and the emergence of events. (Dean, 1999: 21-23; Foucault, 1991b: 75; Helén, 2005: 100-104).

Genealogy is also a study of the elements of dispositifs that define our existence, the *ethos*. The genealogist studies the ethos as a “manual” for the “art of living” and “cultivation of the self” (Foucault, 1986: 67). Ethos can be approached through the guidelines of life, which define the meaningfulness of the subject’s everyday life. The ethos conducts the activities and behavior of an individual along the lines of that which is good and a worthy objective. (Ibid., 99-100).

Mitchell Dean (1998: 184-187) writes that the genealogist is above all interested in *practices*. Here, the concept “practice” does not refer to arbitrary practices present in everyday life of individuals, but to a relatively established, general and organized way of doing things and behaving. Therefore, practice is an *a priori*, a program for the behavior and action. The genealogist studies the regimes of practices (Dean, 1999: 23). They are systems of practices, which programmaticize human action, and “which have prescriptive effects regarding what is to be done (effects of ‘jurisdiction’), and codifying effects regarding what is to be known (effects of ‘verification’)” (Foucault, 1991b: 75). The assimilation of the Roma can be named a regime of practice.

Paul Veyne (1996) argues that it is indeed Foucault’s profound interest in practices that differentiates his studies from the “historiography of the historians” (Foucault, 1977a). Contrary to the traditional historiography, Foucault tries to analyze the practices and their precise convoluted forms by stripping away the veils of objectivity and congruence (Veyne, 1996). This way he tries to show that there is more in every step of the history than somewhat universal chronologies reveal (see also Foucault, 1991b: 86). Gavin Kendall and Gary Wickham debate in their book *Using Foucault’s Methods* (1999: vii) the benefits of genealogy and note that “researchers in this emerging tradition...introduce a new way of

understanding the intersection of power and knowledge.” The benefit of Foucault’s genealogy—if compared to traditional historiography—is that it requires one to pay close attention to the operations of power and exposes the multi-ingredient nature of these operations. This point of departure leads a researcher to see that historical events and happenings are not simply corollaries, reactions or responses to the “natural” developments in the sphere of the social, but often emerge and become approachable because of the function of regimes of practices and systems of governance: the prison system was not taken into use because of the change in the nature of crime or human behavior in general, but because of changes in political rationalities, ways in understanding the significance of an individual subject, and tendency to create more efficient apparatuses of control (Foucault, 1977b). I do not intend to argue that “traditional historiographies” are not based on the meticulous descriptions of the historical practices. Instead, I attempt to show that genealogy concentrates on the role of governing in these practices and tries to grasp how these practices are made to happen and how it is possible to approach them in the power/knowledge nexus.

### **“The Swedish empire strikes back”**

The first literary sources of the Roma in Sweden-Finland (the time between the 12<sup>th</sup> century and 1809) are from 1512, when judge and priest Olaus Petri registered in the protocol of Stockholm city council that a group of vagabonds had migrated to Sweden. This was the first time that the Roma were made visible in administrative texts of the Crown (cf. Dean, 1999: 29). In 1525, the deportation policy directed at these vagabonds by the Swedish king continued this way of thinking: the Roma were seen as non-citizens and their lifestyle as a threat to the post-Reformation work ethos and endeavors of the unifying economics of the empire. The deportation policy was not very effective because many of the Roma received protection permissions and passports from the local chatelains. These wavers enabled them to continue their vagabondism relatively freely. An empire-wide Roma policy did not exist during the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This was mainly due to the lack of common administrative definitions and knowledge of the Roma. (Etzler, 1944: 46-60; Pulma, 2005: 20-24).

During the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century, citizenship of foreigners in the Swedish empire was determined by their usefulness to the Crown and relationship to the Christian faith. As there was no certainty regarding

these matters in the case of the Roma, they were mainly governed as “social cases”: the Crown tried to fight pauperism and beggars by prohibiting vagabondism and by intimidating people to take up work. Many of the Roma were evasive merchants; it was not seen as a proper and respectful profession.

The first literary sources of the Roma in the territory of the present Finland are from the year 1559, when the Duke of Finland sent a commandment to the bailiff of the Åland islands with a strict command to end their illegal trade. During the 1580s, there were several mentions of the Roma in the prisoners list of the Castle of Turku. In 16<sup>th</sup> century there were several mentions of the wandering groups of “Tatars” around Southern Finland .

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, kings, earls, and bailiffs tried to root out the travelling lifestyle of the Roma through their forced relocation to the eastern parts of Finland and their enlistment in the Royal Army. However, for the Roma, army membership guaranteed a possibility to carry on vagabondism, as all the soldiers were recognized citizens of the empire. The Roma were also exploited as a labor force in castle and city constructions (Pulma, 2006: 32-33).

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Roma did not have a recognized position or status in the official social grouping in the same way as the landless—except those belonging to the army. This made it possible for the profane and religious authorities to force these “non-citizens” into labor camps and organize forced custody of their children. Children of the Roma parents who did not accept their new living situations, or submit to a Christian baptism or the order to work, were divided from their parents and relocated into families in which they had to practice manual labor such as farming and cleaning at a very early age. The idea was that forced labor would break the children’s will to continue the “laziness” and vagabondism of their parents (Ganander, 1780; Pulma, 2006: 32-35).

The Nordic university system started to systematically develop and grow in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but the great majority of the research on the Roma was still done by religious scholars. Religious knowledge was in the position of ultimate truth. It spread stereotypical and hostile attitudes toward the Roma among the administrators of the Crown. Later on, the first university studies of the 18<sup>th</sup> century repeated these stereotypes and attitudes. In these studies, the Roma were seen as a threat to the Crown and the natural social order of the society in the Swedish empire. This

picture was again repeated in the first scientific research on the Roma in Sweden-Finland, which was done by Kristffrid Ganander, chaplain of the parish in Ostrobothnia. (Ganander, 1780; see also Pulma, 2006: 36-48).

### **Case I: the Hanging Law of 1637**

One thing that was distinctive of the governance of the Roma in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Swedish empire was that it was based on the threat of death and exclusion. One event in which the sovereign governance of the Roma was at its clearest was the so-called “Hanging Law” implemented in 1637. It was the first law made in the Swedish empire that touched only upon the Roma. The main content of the law was that every Roma must leave the territory of the Swedish empire within a year after the law came into effect. If a Roma man did not leave the country voluntarily, he was supposed to be hanged without trial and his wife and children removed from the country. One peculiar feature of the law was that everyone belonging to the Swedish-speaking majority and with the Christian faith could execute this action—not just the authorities of the Crown. This mirrored the initial transformation in the orientation of governance: rationalities and techniques of the sovereign power united with the forms of biopower (Foucault, 1990: 135-159), with population as its main target and instrument.

Prior to the “Hanging Law,” there was already a corresponding law in Denmark, and the Swedish Crown adopted this model in Sweden. The Hanging Law descended also from the existing Swedish legislation and policy discourses, in which poverty and unemployment were mainly signified as signs of a lack of loyalty to the Crown and a lack of Christian faith. In the problematizations that occurred before the Hanging Law, the pre-existing forms of knowledge about the citizens and effectiveness of governing acts were not seen to be valid anymore. New techniques, rationalities and the *telos* of governance, and discourses concerning the ethos of misfits were needed.

These problematizations and finally the event of the Hanging Law emerged in a situation in which the number of the Roma increased and they became more visible than they had previously been. At the same time, the poverty increased and the probability of rebellions grew generally in the Empire. The Crown needed to strengthen its grip on the citizens and aristocracy, which tried to take advantage of the waning of the king’s dominance after the death of King Gustav Adolf II. Actually, the Hanging

Law was a kind of a handshake from the new queen to the aristocracy, which had started to demand new and more violent forms of the use of power in regulating social unrest and deviance. The issue of the Roma was thus used to strengthen the sovereign government. (Ettzler, 1944: 68-71; Pulma, 2005: 24-25).

Nonetheless, the Hanging Law was not only sovereign in its nature. It strengthened the rationality of the government of the population as a culturally homogeneous entity and the conceptualization of the Roma as “others,” against whom the ethos and subjectivities of the majority were constructed. Although it was not based on vital statistics or any other form of systematic population research, but mainly on rumblings and hypothesis, the emergence of the law indicated the coming of the new biopolitical rationality and concept of governance, the population. Administrators started to separate different parts from the population in order to control and regulate them in the name of the well-being of the whole. Therefore, the Hanging Law can very well be named as an event in the history of Finnish ethno-politics. However, the Hanging Law was not a total break in governance of the minorities and underprivileged. It is more likely the case that it was a continuation of the previous deportation laws and such techniques as imprisonment and torture, but it did introduce the threat of death as a new technique of governance.

The Hanging Law also bore the Protestant ethos of servility, as it taught of the superiority of the Christian faith and a humble and hardworking lifestyle for the “lower forms of life.” While trying to exclude a “bad” and “wrong” ethos from the sphere of life, it constructed the eligible ethos of the population and its individuals. Those who embodied the Protestant work ethic in their lives were allowed to live in peace in the territory of the sovereignty and were accepted as part of “the flock,” which could enter God’s Kingdom after death. Thus, the ethos of the Hanging Law was typical of the Christian forms of pastoral power, in which the inner-life and soul of the individual needed to be conducted and cherished in the name of the individual’s salvation in the next life (cf. Foucault, 2007: 115-134, 148-156). The pastoral art of existence consisted of asceticism, self-sacrifice for work and Crown, and asserting one’s inner soul-life for the king and God through religious practices such as prayer, baptism, and church-going. The self-practice of the Roma, however, interestingly revealed the contingent nature of power here: what many of the Roma did after the law was to join the Royal army and receive passports and legal



permissions to continue their sojourns and thereby practice a form of counter-ethos.

### **Under the Russian Rule 1809-1917**

The Russian Czar Alexander I conquered Finland in 1809. After being forcefully settled for centuries within the Swedish empire, it was now possible for the Roma to move further East and practice trade with the Carelians, the Ingrians, the Russians, and the Estonians. However, during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, governance of the Roma continued almost as it was under Swedish rule. The forced labor got even more general than before. The Roma policy was part of the general vagrant policy at first, but after the increase of poverty in the mid-1800s, Russian governors and Finnish authorities started to develop a specific Roma policy. (Pulma, 2006: 48-55, 48-75).

During the period of the Russian empire, the biopolitical nature of the ethno-politics strengthened: more so than before, the lives of the Roma were steered toward the right tracks not only for the sake of the welfare of the whole population, but also the individual Roma themselves (cf. Foucault, 2002: 298-325). The lifestyle of the Roma was considered to be unhealthy for them as a people, and it was considered a risk that they may spread their laziness, deviousness, and paganism among other members of the underclass if they were not strictly restrained. At the same time as the change in rationality, technologies of disciplinary power started to compensate for the sovereign forms: the souls and bodies of the Roma were now conducted through Christian education for the children and by forcing adults into manual labor in prisons or labor camps. In the first years of Russian rule, the female Roma also became subject to this technique. Many of them were forcefully taken into labor camps and their children were taken into custody. Indeed, male youngsters were forced into the Royal army. (Pulma, 2006: 48-49, 55-69).

The Roma question was raised in the first parliamentary session after the Russian invasion in 1863. The initiative of the priests aimed at correcting the indecency of the Roma lifestyle—their limited knowledge of Christian dogmas, laziness, unholy (non-married) relationships, wandering lifestyle, and violent acts that the wandering Romany has been said to carry out in different parts of the Principality of Finland. In the committee statement of the Parliamentary session, the governors suggested that those who were

willing to settle permanently should get the same citizen rights as the majority. (Pulma, 2006: 55-78).

One of the most significant events in the history of governance of the population in Finland was the foundation of the Central Statistical Bureau in 1865. Although population as a target of government was not a completely new thing in the Principality of Finland, systematic statistical research was. Previously, the knowledge on the Roma had been based on the information from the individual churchmen and authorities, but now it was possible to collate overall statistics about the Roma and calculations of their development, and, subsequently, compare them to other elements of the population. In the case of the Roma, the statistical research was especially justified with the need for knowledge on their unemployment, residences, and movement, but also on dangerous infectious diseases, such as typhus and tuberculosis. (Pulma, 2006: 84-87).

Another significant event in knowledge production was the first research with actual interviews of the Roma informants on their means of livelihood and living conditions. It was published in 1897 and 1898. This research raised two problematizations to the central position: on the one hand, ethno-cultural heritage of the Roma was now seen as cause for their misery and weak social position. According to this view, the laziness and deviousness of the Roma had become part of their bloodline and ethnic character. On the other hand, research indicated that the weak social conditions that the Roma found themselves in were one reason for their illegal activities, such as looting and tax evasion. A lack of “book knowledge” and literacy and a work despising lifestyle were now seen more as indicators of ethnic or racial nature than of the lack of Christian faith (Thesleff, 1897-1898). A few years before Thesleff’s research, the first extensive collection of demographic statistics about the number, inhabitation, and living conditions of the Roma population was executed by the Central Statistical Bureau. Both pieces of research played a crucial role in the new administrative acts directed at the Roma at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the main acts was the so-called “Walle’s Committee,” which was a body nominated by the senate for the comprehensive study of the “Gypsy question.”

### **Case II: Walle’s committee**

Walle’s committee was established in 1898. The committee consisted of one county dean (Alexander Gustaf Walle), the head of the municipal civil

register, the judge of the district court, a representative of the tiller estate in the Senate, and a Roma researcher (Thesleff). The committee was one of the key events in ethno-politics during the period of Russian rule. As such, the committee descended from older legislation, problematizations of existing legislation, policy discussions, and statistical and ethnographic research. It is important to note that preceding the committee, there had been years of hunger (1866-1868) and continuous poverty, and at that time the economy was only slowly recovering in the Principality of Finland. Different experts and authorities used these structural phenomena to problematize the existing legislation and forms of governance as not efficient enough in controlling “the suspicious elements of the population”, such as the Roma. Problematizations were emphasized with metaphors of illness: one aristocratic Senate member, who participated in the discussions on the Committee before it was established, compared the Roma to a “social disability” and their lifestyle to “disease, the nature and quality of which must be learned through research” (Pulma, 2006: 85).

The starting points of the committee’s suggestions for policy renewals were the consideration that the Roma living in Finland were Finnish citizens, and trust in the “fact” that a long-term solution to the Gypsy-question relied on raising the level of their civilization. The committee noted that this path was long and it needed to be secured by the state. The statement made was that the assimilation of the Roma should happen mainly through education. Once again, the Roma children proved to be the main target group in the breakthrough of this biopolitical educational rationality. The committee planned four boarding schools—two for both sexes, because “Roma boys are known from their early-wakening sexuality”—through which the children could be separated from their parents and get decent religious, moral, civilizing, and vocational education (Pulma, 2006: 95). Crucial to this process was the regulation of their sexuality and desires so that they would not become mentally confused, but would instead become responsible breeders of the new diligent citizens (cf. Foucault, 1990: 104-105).

One new thing in the committee’s statement regarding the governance of the Roma was the emphasis placed on the role of clubs, societies, associations and some private ventures. It suggested, in the spirit of liberalism that in addition to state and church, philanthropy should have a significant role in conducting subject formation of the Roma. The committee even noted that the “Roma should be left for the concern of voluntary action and humanitarian love.” Right after the committee’s

statements, a religious association called Romano Missio was established to take care of the social work and Christian education among the Roma. The Romano Missio still exists as a national philanthropic organization “with the aim to act on the basis of the Christian values and as organization providing childcare, social sector, ministry and educational services among the Roma population” (Romano Missio, 2008). Later on, the role of non-religious voluntary or semi-voluntary associations became more and more important in the Finnish ethno-politics (Pulma, 2006: 94, 97-99).

## Conclusions

If one observes the descent of governance of the Roma following Foucault’s (e.g. 1991a) oft-cited analysis of descending lines of regimes of power, it is possible to point out some crucial similarities and differences. During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the technologies of the government of the Roma were the ones familiar to sovereign power: imprisonment, deportation, the threat of death, and sometimes torture (cf. Foucault, 1977b). Although a vague idea existed about the population during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and some rationalities of governance could be named as biopolitical, systematic technologies of knowledge production—such as demographic statistics used as a method to calculate the characteristics of the population—did not exist, and despite taxation there were no permanent institutional arrangements for governing the population with the principle “*omnes et singulatim*” (Foucault, 2002: 298-325).

Later on, when Finland was still under Swedish rule, but especially during the era of Russian rule, technologies started to become reminiscent of the ones familiar in the disciplinary punishment and governance of population, and to relate more clearly to biopolitical rationalities. Deportations were still in active use, but instead of the threat of death, forcing people into labor camps and removing the Roma children into custody clearly became more popular than before. The Christian education gained more weight, too. Little by little, the idea of enhancing the vitality of the population was introduced in the governance of the Roma and the central administration did not see the deportation or demolition of the Roma subject as a reasonable alternative anymore. Instead, it was seen to be possible that the Roma too could be educated in order to become productive and humble subordinates.

There are two broad discourses concerning the eligible ethos and subjectivity of the Roma in the observed historical period. Firstly, there is the discourse of *homo religiosus*. Before the coining of the concepts of ethnicity or race in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the governance of the Roma was based on the idea of governing the souls of individuals in the name of Christianity. The measures of governance were justified with the non-Christian lifestyle, habits, and beliefs of the Roma. The ideal Roma-subject was the one who confessed to Christian religion and expressed it through everyday rituals such as prayer. This soul-caring was a path to hardworking and law-abiding subjectivity. The previous already refers to the other widespread discourse of the ideal Roma-subject: *homo economicus*. The good Christian is one who works hard and takes care of his/her economy, with family being the basic economic unit (see Foucault, 1991a: 92). Unemployment and laziness were criminalized characteristics in profane justice, but also “criminalized” in the eyes of God. Subsequently, if the individual was not a good *homo economicus*, s/he would receive double the punishment. *Homo economicus* was not important only in the pastoral sense, but also in the sense of liberal governance and citizenship: only those who were able to practice careful housekeeping could gain the status of a free-citizen.

Finally, it is relevant to observe the benefits of the genealogical historiography in the case of the Roma. I try to show this by taking advantage of Mitchell Dean’s (1999: 23, 29-33) formula of the five different elements that should be analyzed when studying the history of regimes of practices; governance of the Roma and its different forms such as segregation and assimilation, for instance. Firstly, genealogical method leads the researcher to analyze the *characteristic forms of visibility and ways of seeing* the Roma. Here, this is studied in the representations of the Roma in administrative texts and research; how is the racial and individual character of the Roma constructed in them? Secondly, I have analyzed the *epistemic dimension* of this particular regime of practice by showing how research and theories concerning the Roma relate to the governmental problematizations, renewals, and events. Thirdly, the *technological dimension* is here noticed by making visible the actual forms of the governance such as the deportation of the Roma and their forced resettlement. Fourthly, I have adhered to the *dimension of subjectification* by analyzing the forms of Roma subjectivity in which the governmental practices intervened (e.g. the traveling lifestyle of the Roma and non-Christianity/paganism), and which kinds of Roma-subjectivities the governance aimed at (hard-working and culturally-assimilated Roma). The

fifth element of the regime of practice that should be studied, according to Dean, is the programmatic and teleological dimension of government. I discovered that during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the main rationality and teleology of the governance of the Roma was to guarantee the position of the king and God in the empire, and after the development of the idea of society and population, the health, predictability, and normality of the population became a central rationality in the programs of governance. If compared to Pulma's (2006) study of the history of the Roma politics in Nordic countries, for instance, the genealogical approach delineates the comprehension and understanding of the intertwining of power and knowledge, and makes it possible to systematically disassemble the events and practices of governance.

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# THE BIRTH OF CANADIAN BORDER SECURITY/SÉCURITÉ<sup>1</sup>

CHRISTOPHER ALDERSON



Figure 1. c. 1873 Sappers building a boundary mound, Canadian prairies and along 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. Library and Archives Canada/Credit: Royal Canadian Mounted Police/C-073304

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<sup>1</sup> The author thanks Alan Hunt, Rebecca Sandiford, and William Walters—but not Thomas Abrams—for their feedback and suggestions.



## Introduction

In 1872, five years after Canadian confederation, seventy years before the popularization of the international airport, and one hundred twenty-nine years before 11 September 2001 and the current “war on terror,” British and U.S. non-commissioned officers moved westward along the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel to demarcate the boundary line separating the United States and Canada. It took four years for the *North American Boundary Commission* to mark the line separating U.S. from Canadian jurisdictions. And as part of a frontier imaginary, these jurisdictions were divided with placards and mounds so that the law could be enforced, civilizing processes could continue, and both nations could be built.

In light of a Foucaultian analytics of government, the bordering represented in the above image is significant for two reasons. First, as borders are constitutive of governable spaces, Figure 1 is illustrative of the gridding process or striation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) taking place in North America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that was making possible liberal spaces. Beyond a negotiation towards Lockean property rights, the exacting Euclidian geometry erected in adherence to the European system of longitude and latitude helped constitute what R.B.J. Walker (1993) identifies as the problematic of sovereign identity pinned to a homogenized state space; more simply, the government of people *as a nation and in state space*. This marking makes possible the categorical distinctions between here/there and us/them, suturing identity to place. The image is photographic evidence of the (marginally successful) attempts to individuate space and constitute individual Canadian and American populations. The second point of importance is the way the problem of bordering represented above may work to denaturalize the present-day preoccupations with “border security.” Among other things, the photograph demonstrates another problematization of the border that is removed from the contemporary belief that borders are the source of both security and insecurity. With no fences, armed guards, or checkpoints, this 1873 photograph reminds us of another understanding, where “smart, secure borders” were not, as argued today by the Canadian *Minister of Public Safety*, “essential to preserving a cherished way of life” (Day, 2007: 2). While the border of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was recognized as representing the limits of national territory, it is not in itself *governmentalized* as an *apparatus of security*. It was not the preeminent site associated with population governance, health and security that it is today; it was not where national security *happened*.

Somewhere between these two implications, the partial genealogy I pursue here is interested in exploring some of the transitions that took place in locating the question of population mobility and national health at the U.S.-Canada border. I am interested in the emergence of the border as a conceptual and material object of national security; a transition in which the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, serving almost exclusively as a marker outlining national character and jurisdiction, shifted function and meaning to become “Canada’s first line of defense, ensuring the safety and security of Canadians” (Canada Border Service Agency, 2007: 25). After briefly outlining the contemporary discourse and literature on border security, I make the case following Foucault that we should treat “security” as a governmental concept, rather than an inherent ideal or unchanging state. As a useful analytical lens for understanding both contemporary and historical formations of population health, historicizing the current formations of security (or what Foucault called *dispositifs du sécurité*) helps sharpen our attention to the ways the border was first constituted as a site for ensuring population health and thus was prepared for uptake within the discourse of the “war on terror.” I make the case here that the emergence of border controls in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is the emergence of an apparatus of security *par excellence*. Through a problematization of immigration as both essential and hazardous, this apparatus was designed not only to defend the Canadian population against “undesirables” but also to shape the Canadian people *cum* population. The birth of Canadian border *sécurité* linked the colonial project of nation building to the governmental technology of population health.

### **Contemporary Border Security and its Literatures:**

Tied to the temporality of “9/11,” the recent preoccupation with borders is largely concerned with the “aftermath” of 11 September 2001, an event said to mark a turning point towards a new global security order. In Canada, the near total shutdown of the US-Canada border by American authorities awakened policymakers to the economic dangers of border closure. The near closure of the border did not represent security—closure meant billions of dollars in lost economic activity and strained relations with an essential trading partner. Reflecting upon the policy response, Peter Andreas argues:

The post-September 11 security environment has reshaped not only the practices of border controls but also the politics of cross-border relations...Eager to assure that the U.S. border remains economically open,

Mexico and Canada have adopted new steps to signal that they are taking border security more seriously (2003: 94).

With free trade jeopardized, the alarm bells of neo-classical economic theory started to sound, and Canada's supposedly lax security screening and "open doors" were to blame. Openness for economic purposes juxtaposed with closure against terrorists and international criminals meant *something* needed to be done at the border!

In response, stating that the "terrorist actions of September 11 were an attack on our common commitment to democracy, the rule of law and a free and open economy," Canadian and American representatives soon signed the *Smart Border Declaration* in an attempt to create a "North American Zone of Confidence" (Canada, 2001). The agreement included pre-screening and advanced screening mechanisms to expedite legitimate movement while focusing more heavily upon suspected illegitimate ones. The *Canada Border Services Agency* (CBSA) was also newly minted. Bringing together the "front-line" border management and enforcement activities of *Canada Customs, Citizenship and Immigration Canada*, the *Canadian Food Inspection Agency* and some 90 acts, regulations and international agreements, the CBSA's mandate remains to provide "integrated border services that support national security and public safety priorities and facilitate the movement of persons and goods" (CBSA, 2007: 5). From this perspective, unrestricted, unmonitored movement cannot be allowed, but neither can complete shutdown; a balance is sought between scrutiny and economic mobility to achieve modern border security.

Making sense of this problem, and the "war on terror" more generally, studies in governmentality argue that advanced liberal political rationalities are co-constitutive of changing bordering practices, which include trade liberalization under NAFTA, efforts to develop a North American *Security and Prosperity Project*, and biometry with risk scoring programs as border controls. Many have also examined the new forms of citizenship being inscribed in North America via emerging mobility regimes enacted at the international border. For instance, Matthew Sparke has described how the increasing securitization of liberal economic mobility has provided the context for the creation of the US-Canada NEXUS card. He argues, "this little known expedited border-crossing program and its development are symptomatic of the neoliberalization of citizenship in today's North American context" (2006: 174). Building upon a Foucaultian account of subjectivity and liberal rationality, Sparke

argues that these new bordering practices indicate a “recodification of the normative citizen-subject as a *transnationally* mobile soft cosmopolitan with heightened human capital vis-à-vis all the kinetic underclass: some of the latter being merely marooned in national-state spaces with weakened political and social citizenship” (ibid: 176). Davina Bhandar argues, “sovereignty and citizenship are being rearticulated through what is popularly refereed to as ‘Fortress North America’” (2004: 261). She points out that the discourse of “the new normal” has legitimized increased state surveillance that has underwritten biometric and biopolitical programs now enacted at the border (ibid). And likewise, Louise Amoore observes that a new restructuring of mobility governance in the current milieu has prompted the creation of a “biometric border,” where the use of risk profiling is now used in “segregating ‘legitimate’ mobilities such as leisure and business from ‘illegitimate’ mobilities such as terrorism or illegal immigration” (2006: 336). Such analysis has led to the conclusion that borders are becoming increasingly biopolitical, screening out undesirable and harmful human material and ensuring the health of the population within.

What much of this literature has neglected to do, however, is account for *how* the border was constructed as a site of population security in the first place; how it *became* biopolitical. Recent work, both within and outside a Foucaultian analytics, has failed to describe the elements that constructed the border as an object for social ordering. For instance: When and how did bordering first become associated with a need to verify identity? What other kinds of citizenship have been enacted at the border? Or alternatively, what constituted “security” before the border existed? This absence is especially apparent when we look to the boundary marking of 1873 (see Figure 1) for comparison or the popular discourse at the time which held up national identity against international mobility, as illustrated in Figure 2. It is true that recent work has proved useful in pointing out the political stakes of contemporary border security, thereby deflating government pronouncements on the supposed innocuous nature of recent bordering programs. Yet this particular periodization (or lack thereof) tends to have two problematic effects: unhistorical analysis has either blurred the past into a homogeneous entity wholly distinct from today (“9/11 changed everything”), or, in presentist fashion, has written the border as unchanging since its inception (“continuing the proud tradition of the longest undefended border”). This work has neglected to question the *invention* of “border security.” It has not addressed the way in which the border has become part of the apparatus of security. One way to get at

some of these questions is to reflect upon how the notion of “security” is implicated in processes of government, or how security is itself governmental.



Figure 2. c. 1880 “Miss Canada” attracted to America’s Uncle Sam.  
Caption: “‘It’s Only a Question of Time.’ Old Fogysim may hold her back for a while, but she is bound to come to us.” Library and Archives Canada/C-006440

## Security, Sécurité, or Sûreté

While the word “security” has become ubiquitous in popular discourse and the analysis of politics, the singular English noun loses the nuances of the French, which becomes pivotal when evaluating the invention of *national security*. The problem arises with the conflation of the French *sécurité*—associated with the future-oriented management of risk—and *sûreté*—which refers more to defensive or sentry forces.<sup>2</sup> It has been the overwhelming preoccupation with the notion of *sûreté* that has left the

<sup>2</sup> Conceptually, the division is familiar to those working within a Foucauldian analytics: it is the distinction between Machiavelli’s territorial orientation of government and the subsequent emergence of population as the orientation of government (Valverde, 2007: 172; Foucault, 1991: 87-104)

analysis of borders wanting. *Sûreté* implies the problem and principle of sovereignty and militarism above all else; borders can be nothing other than a manifestation of the principle of sovereignty. Although the principles, concepts and technologies of sovereignty are important to modern political thought, they are nonetheless short of the entire story.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to understand the transition from a boundary line to border security through the lens of *sûreté* alone. For one thing, this would neglect to recognize the constitutive role borders play in *making* a people. While the traditional *International Relations* narrative describes borders as manifestations of a nation's will, distinctiveness and association with a particular territory, borders are in themselves a technology that makes a people or nation thinkable as categories to begin with. In the Canadian and American context, it was not until the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that mass emigration of "Canadians" to the United States ended (Ramirez, 2001; Timlin, 1960; Studness, 1964), occurring only after the imprinting of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel into the imaginary of the public and the emergence of institutions meant to enforce a separation of people and goods crossing. The 49<sup>th</sup> parallel still stands out in contemporary Canadian mythology as what separates Canadians from their southern neighbors, both politically and culturally, but it was not always the practical and natural divisive line that it is today. A *sûreté* lens also falls short in accounting for the current imperative of economic openness and political integration. Security is not achieved, as mentioned in the previous section, through the closure of the border; this is only part of the invention of border security. National security in Canada is quite often positioned as being dependent on *further* integration with the United States.

In contrast, when we think through "security" in relation to *sécurité*, we gain some purchase on the productive and constitutive relationship between social, institutional and individual organization, and population health. That is, we gain insight into the means by which *sécurité* imaginations are erected *through* populations, not simply and singularly upon population as the lens of *sûreté* might suggest. We gain an understanding of how *sécurité* is in fact governmental, and how it is itself a governmentality.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Mariana Valverde observes keenly that until the fourth lecture of *Security, Territory, Population*—the solo lecture published in 1991 in *The Foucault Effect*—Foucault uses the term "*sécurité*" in place of "governmentality" (Valverde, 2007: 172).

Foucault outlined governmentality as, on the one hand, a distinct organizing diagram from that of sovereignty alone, and, on the other hand, as a development of specialized knowledges regarding life and life processes (Foucault, 2007: 46-47). Given that modern population government is in effect the government of life, the contingency of life demands that social or economic phenomena are inserted into a field of *probable events*, rather than the illusory modality of total sovereign control of all happenings; and given this field of probability—rather than certainty of governability, as with the model of sovereignty—governmentality (or *sécurité*) necessitates the rise in cost-based calculative reasoning (Foucault, 2007: 5-6); reasoning used to determine what action works best at a particular moment and where to put governmental energies. Governmentality, for Foucault, also largely forecloses sovereign dictates of prohibited and permitted, because securing a population (*vis-à-vis sécurité*) is more concerned with optimizing and normalizing phenomena (Foucault, 2007: 49), with creating the *conditions* for ideal transactions and circulations to occur (or not occur) through a given population, rather than setting out and foreclosing the notion of the acceptable and unacceptable. Donzelot put it succinctly when he argues that modern liberal governance is the “endeavour to determine what it is advisable to do (the agenda) and not do (the non-agenda)” (2008: 122).

Yet, how does government implement, construct and emerge out of knowledge and into the practical, into the realm of the possible? How are *probable events, calculated at a cost, then normalized?* Foucault suggests that “*dispositifs du sécurité*,” or apparatus of security, may render a given field governable (Foucault, 2007: 6). By working through lines of subjection and force between points, rendering phenomena visible and making possible the utterance of their name, *dispositifs* make particular thinking and action coherent and stable (Deleuze, 2007: 334-336). Bordering today, for instance, requires the deployment of a *dispositif* that, among other things, make the *utterance* of “citizen”, “refugees,” and “illegal” possible and logical; it requires these objects to become *subjects* in some instances, acting as citizen and landed immigrant; and most basically, it requires the construction of mechanisms rendering these phenomena *visible*, through identity cards, border lines and extra-territorial surveillance. What an apparatus of security works to do is “fabricate, organize, and plan a milieu” making population health, whatever that may be, attainable and securable (Foucault, 2007: 21). And just as there have been many historical variations of arts of government, so too have there been many variations of what healthy life has been equated with.

Changing governmentalities are equivalent to changing *sécurité* conceptualizations, changing apparatus of security. What is relevant for this chapter is to consider what sets of knowledges and discourses were deployed in thinking through the future health of the Canadian population that located the provision of this kind of security at, among other locations and sites, the international border.

It is not surprising, then, that the historical practices of governance based on the concepts of territoriality, the formation of international markets, and the concept of “national” populations would eventually conjoin to privilege political boundaries as a critical site of health. Rather than being an end to border controls, territorial control should perhaps be conceptualized as a way to maximize positive circulations and minimize negative ones. As sites of mobility and transaction between demographically distinct populations, borders and border regions have become critical locations where flows can be monitored. This not only illustrates the political use of territory to manage populations, it also demonstrates the convergence of social-scientific knowledges about national groups, for it is inside the boundary that demographically distinct groups are located.

### **The Birth of Canadian Border *Sécurité***

Liberal governmentalities have not always positioned national *sécurité* as the free mobility for entrepreneurial subjects, as is the case today. In Canada’s very early years, national *sécurité* was the expansion/settlement of the new colony, and later the western frontier. As the “social” and “economic” were not yet distinct spheres, economic mobility was not yet a right enshrined within the *sécurité problematique*. Towards this colonial impetus of settlement, massive campaigns in both Europe and the United States were carried out under Minister Clifford Sifton in the late 1890s until the first World War to vitalize emigration to western Canada—“the bread basket” or “cannery” of Great Brittan and “The Last Best West” of North America (Troper, 1972; Bruce, 2000). Immigration responsibilities fell under the *Department of Interior* (later *Immigration and Colonization*, then *Mines and Resources*). Beyond collecting basic demographic information at ports of entry (for the production of national statistics), the department supervised settlement via immigration sheds at “distribution points” in western Canada (Timlin, 1960: 520). This variation of *sécurité* animated a 1911 advertisement published by the Canadian *Department of the Interior* (see Figure 3). Notifying the American public “40,000 Men Needed in Western Canada to Harvest 100,000,000 Bushels of Grain,” the



**40,000 MEN NEEDED** **40,000**  
in  
**WESTERN CANADA**  
To Harvest 400,000,000 BUSHELS OF GRAIN

DULUTH SUPERIOR MINNEAPOLIS ST. PAUL  
PORTAL REGINA CALGARY EDMONTON WINNIPEG

ST PAUL-MINNEAPOLIS to ESTEVAN WEYBURN MOOSE JAW \$12.00  
DULUTH, SUPERIOR

TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS and SATURDAYS  
Good Going Only August 10, 12, 15, 17, 19, 22, 24, 26, 29, 31, 1911

Figure 3. c. 1911 “40,000 Men Needed in Western Canada.” Poster to encourage American immigration to Canada. Library and Archives Canada/C-056088

poster alludes to two distinctive identities on either side of 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. While the trope of “distinctiveness” is still popular, what is peculiar is that a hyperbolized and fictitious body of water, stretching east to west, is what separates the two nations. The border itself is inhibiting national progress; the imaginary at the time identified a *lack* of movement across the international boundary as the problem. Important for this genealogy of

contemporary border security, national borders at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century failed to register as anything other than a marker of jurisdiction and space outlying national character. In the west, the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel was little else than an outline of where Canada was still to be constructed through the influx and settlement of people from overseas and across the border.<sup>4</sup>

With mobility and settlement conceptualized as essential to national progress, how did the border become located conceptually as a legal-juridico machine for screening the movements of people? How did the border come to be understood as a place for securing population health? One answer is the proliferation of a discourse of race and purity that conflicted with the alternative notion of unfettered immigration as a national good. The problem was not only how to protect the population, but also *who is* the population, what is the particular nation in need of protection. Like many colonial projects, Canada (with its 40 year history at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) was still very concerned with the objective of constructing a Canadian nationality. And unlike the history of European governmentalities Foucault outlined, the governmentalization of this colonial state appeared to occur simultaneously along the construction of a people or nationality. There was no given society to be defended. As Ann Stoler argues, “what is striking about colonial projects is that both the notions of a ‘population’ and a ‘people’ often were being crafted by administrators *cum* ethnographers *at the same time*” (1995: 39). Within Canada, the problem of securing the population was being addressed at the same time as the need to construct it. The imperative of restriction worked alongside that of attraction in hopes of attaining a desired social body.

Two examples of such “administrators *cum* ethnographers” stand out in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: the first, J.S Woodsworth, Methodist minister turned social worker and immigration commentator, the second, *Minister of the Interior*, Frank Oliver. What is telling, and common for both men, is that the “immigration problem” was not purely the negative connotation popularized today; the *problem* was rather matter of positively shaping the

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<sup>4</sup> James Macdonald (2003) has demonstrated that the US-Canada border was itself “missing” from the discourse surrounding a reciprocity trade agreement with the United States. Of concern in this period was the degree North-South trade might damage Canada’s efforts to build an East-West axis of nationhood (Macdonald, 2003: 52-57). During this period, migration of settlers between the U.S. and Canada was unrestricted and substantial. Cf. Troper, 1972; Knowles, 1992; Ramirez, 2001.

forming nationality of “Canadian.” For Oliver, in contrast to his predecessor Clifford Sifton:

It is not merely a question of filling [Canada] with people who will produce wheat and manufactured goods. It is a question of the ultimate results of the efforts being put forward for the *building up of a Canadian nationality* so that our children may form one of the greatest civilized nations of the world... This can never be accomplished if the preponderance of the population should be such of class and character as will deteriorate rather than elevate the conditions of our people and our country at large. (1903)

And likewise, for Woodsworth, the problem of immigration emerged out of the necessity to see that “the mingling of races” and the “unstable equilibrium” resulted in an improved nation and “future of our people” ([1909] 1972, 183). What Oliver, Woodsworth and other reformers sought to do was avoid tainting Canada with those culturally, morally and politically “degenerate.” And as Marianna Valverde has eloquently argued, the ideal of Canadian citizenship at the time was clearly positioned towards the supposed characteristics of the British subject/citizen—where a degree of internalized self-control and regulation, corresponding to respect for authority, were traits pre-installed or easily achieved through assimilation (Valverde 1991, 104-128). In this vein, Woodsworth even went so far in his 1909 book *The Strangers within Our Gates*, to construct a taxonomy and commentary on immigrant races and cultures as they related to how their coming might benefit or harm the new Canadian nation. The book starts with the most desirable races, “Immigrants from Great Brittan,” and works its way down seven other groups to finally the “Hebrews,” “Italians,” “Levantine races,” “Orientals,” and finally “Negro and Indian” ([1909] 1972); he asserts that the “Oriental” and “Negro” cannot be assimilated. However, it was not only “inferior races” who were disapproved of. Those coming from most favored notions were readily rejected as well. In fact, in 1908, upon suspicion that the British were attempting to reduce their poor rate (and dump their own undesirable subjects), 70% of the 1,800 deportations that year were deportations back to Britain (Timlin, 1960: 523). And for the three years previous to 1908, after Icelanders, Danes, Walsh, the English had the highest rate of deportation at 1 in 496 arriving (Woodsworth, [1909] 1972: 203). Frank Oliver is even reported having described impoverished Britons as a “drug on the labour market” (Timlin, 1960: 523).

It is with this social milieu that the imperative to create border-screening mechanisms is comprehensible. Put succinctly, controls and screening

were one of the solutions which would allow a positive circulation and settlement of subject/citizens, preconfigured with character and liberal constitution, to be maximized—providing suitable stock for nation building—while at the same time minimizing the harmful circulation of those deemed undesirable and a socio-economic burden.

We want to be in such a position that, should the occasion arise, when public policy seems to demand it, we may have the power...to exclude people whom we consider undesirable....We cannot tell at what time, or under what circumstances, there may be a sudden movement of people from one part of the world or another, and we want to be in a position to check it, should the public demand such an action. (Oliver, 1910)

Oliver outlines here the justification for the construction of such a new *sécurité* apparatus for the Canadian public, an apparatus working to secure the population *vis-à-vis* the restriction and elimination of unwanted mobility into Canada. Here the conceptual relationship between immigrations and border is forged. Borders at this time become incorporated into the mechanisms working to form such a population. What is most interesting, and telling in terms of the longevity of this particular apparatus of security, is the ambiguity Oliver inserts into his statement. Oliver here is suggestive of a future of uncertainty and what Foucault calls the “problem of the series” (2007: 20). For Foucault, as population governance, biopolitics, involves planning a future that is not controllable, measurable or stable, governance then must take into account the unpredictability an “indefinite series of mobile elements” of circulation, and an “indefinite series of events that will occur” (Foucault, 2007: 20). It must take into account the life-like processes that are inherent to the governance of living things, the aleatory or contingent component to life. For Oliver, the problem was of course that unwanted immigrants were coming to Canada; but more specifically, his problem was that the future of life processes are such that officials will never know when there will be an influx of “undesirables” until it is too late. The case of attraction was also articulated in this same way. The *Social Service Council of Canada* of 1922 argued:

Canada’s immigration legislation must be plastic and flexible; it cannot lay down unchangeable principles of admission along lines, but it must create machinery which can open and close our gates automatically as our national conditions can absorb, or even positively require, certain types of immigration (Whitton, 1922: 18-19)

In a sense, both Oliver and *Social Service of Council of Canada* anticipate and are achieving the further governmentalization of the Canadian state. What they and others like them were arguing for was the creation of the means, mechanisms, procedures, tactics, and technologies—or techne—which Canadian officials may employ to direct, induce, and otherwise channel desired and undesired immigrants into and out of Canada; that is, he is arguing for the mechanisms of a governmentalized border, the mechanisms that would “optimize” circulation.

Specific piece of legislation were enacted beginning around the 20<sup>th</sup> century in this capacity to restrict so-called “undesirables.” The *Natal Act*, for instance, which legislated minimal educational requirements such as reading proficiency for all Chinese willing to pay head taxes, was passed in 1900 (Timlin, 1960: 519). The year 1906 brought the Canada’s first *Immigration Act* that providing the first legal mechanisms allowing the *Department of the Interior* to exclude and deport the class of “undesirable.” In this act, those prohibited from landing included: the “feeble-minded”, idiots, those having experienced “an attack of insanity within the last five years,” those infected with a “loathsome disease” (syphilis) or a contagious disease which may become dangerous to the public health, paupers, professional beggars, vagrants and those convicted of a crime of moral turpitude, including prostituting or promotion of prostitution (*Statutes*, 1906: 26-29). The *Immigration Act* of 1910 added a provision that allowed agents to enforce minimum monetary requirements to specific classes of immigrants according to race, occupation and destination within Canada (*Statutes*, 1910: 37). Almost immediately, Blacks moving north from the U.S. were excluded under the pretext of financial and health entry criteria in these acts (Troper, 1974: 121). The formation of the Immigration Border Service in April of 1908 (Knowles, 1992: 88) marked an additional technology used to implement the legal provision passed in Canada over the previous decade. The tightening association between national population and territory, and the problematization of both required and undesirable international mobility provided the conceptual conditions for measures of screening *at the border* for the first time. The new border service was deployed along the US-Canada border in hope of curtailing unwanted immigration from or through the United States. At the time, approximately one third of all immigration into Canada was from the United States (Woodworth, 1972: 26). The close association today between customs and border security first began 100 hundred years ago in Canada with the swearing in of customs agents as immigration inspectors and their deployment along train

platforms, Great Lakes ports of call, and international highway crossings (C.I.H.S, 1988: 1-4). It was also in the 1920s that Canada passed its first law requiring all those traveling into Canada to carry a passport (Whitton, 1922: 7). (Americans and those from the British Isles were exempt from this provision). It is also a little known part of Canadian heritage that Canada persistently refused to accept the Nansen Passport, developed after World War Two for “stateless” refugees, because of the inability to deport such undesirables to a home country (Kaprielian-Churchill, 1994: 285-286). It was the advent and development of these and other bordering technologies or *dispositifs* that helped to birth border security, as we know it today.

### **By Way of Conclusion**

I have suggested a number of points within this chapter. First, while the analyses of contemporary bordering regimes have been useful in illuminating the political stakes of these practices, many nonetheless neglect to explore the emergence of the border as a site of population health and security in the first instance. This has the effect of reifying the border as both natural and rendering its function unhistorical. Secondly, I suggested that one analytical route for unpacking this emergence is to investigate “security” itself as a governmental concept, changing over time and accompanied by various apparatuses or *dispositifs*. Finally, I argued that the birth of the U.S.-Canada border as a site for securing population occurred alongside a particular formulation of *sécurité* in which the movement and settlement of foreign populations was deemed both imperative and dangerous. The border was thus just one apparatus, among many, securing a particular social order. There are of course many different histories of borders that can be told (Walters, 2006: 198-199), many of which bear different significances when considering the politics of modern “border security.” The story I have told here has perhaps one important implication for further inquiry into the politics of life within the “war on terror.” When we consider the history of the U.S.-Canada border, it becomes clear that this border is not biopolitical *because* of the war on terror. Rather, the border is an object of the “war on terror” precisely because it was *already* biopolitical.

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# FOUCAULT FOR THE NEXT CENTURY: ECO-GOVERNMENTALITY<sup>1</sup>

SÉBASTIEN MALETTE

In the late 1970s, Michel Foucault re-engaged with the power\knowledge relations that he had previously analyzed under the rubric of the “microphysics of power.” He did so by examining a number of modern state apparatuses and rationalities of government, linking together population management, political economy, and the question of security (Foucault, 2004a, 2004b; Gordon, 1991). He described these apparatuses and rationalities with a new term, “governmentality,” that referred not only to the means, mechanisms and instruments of modern government, but also to ways of thinking about it systematically (2001). Many subsequent analysts have used the concept of governmentality to make sense of “neoliberal globalization” (Lipschutz, 2005; Larner and Walters, 2004). In this context, some have challenged our ways of understanding freedom in relation to sovereignty (Prozorov, 2007). Others have outlined the disciplinary or normalizing effects of the emergent international order by investigating the “graduation” system for “Third-World” countries (Anghie, 2006) or looking at the spread of social accounting, population management, security control, democratic reform, economic rationality, biopolitical organization, and risk assessment (Porter, 1995; Ewald, 1991; O’Malley, 1996; Dean, 1999; Rose, 2007).

In this chapter, I discuss the possibility of expanding Foucault’s genealogical examination to include ecological rationalities of government. Drawing on his ideas, I suggest that we can see through “ecology” how the ordering of things connects different theaters of governmentality. I argue that “eco-governmentality” reorganizes the relations between the

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank the organizers of the Fifth Annual Social Theory Forum: A Foucault for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Dr. Jorge Capetillo-Ponce, Dr. Sam Binkley and an anonymous reader for all their support, and all the participants that have contributed to enrich this work by their critiques. I also want to thank Dr. Warren Magnusson for his comments on the previous draft.

Foucauldian concepts of population, security and political economy: the three movements constitutive of modern governmentality. I also argue that the emergence of “eco-governmentality” can be read as the intensification and transformation of the “immanent logic” which re-organizes the dualistic and derivative assumptions embedded in our understanding of the political. My main argument is that governmentality studies should recognize “eco-politics” as one of the leading rationalizations of government for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **What is ‘Governmentality’?**

Governmentality is a complex notion coined by Michel Foucault in the late 1970s. This concept emerged shortly after Foucault used a “microphysics of power” to analyze various technologies and rationalities of normalization. As many have suggested, Foucault’s analysis of the micro, disseminated, and ever-shifting locus of power/knowledge came to maturity with the publication of *Surveiller et Punir* in 1975 (Foucault, 2004). He then refocused his genealogical lens on “the problem of the government” (Dean, 1999; Rose, 1999; Gordon, 1991; Burchell, 1996). This shift was in response to two critiques: that he had neglected the “macro” (*i.e.* the state) in favor of the “micro” and that he had portrayed power/knowledge relations in a way that suggested that any project (or subject) of emancipation was doomed (Gordon, 1991). By addressing the problem of government more directly, Foucault was able to show that these critiques were misguided.

For Foucault, the “macro” and “micro” levels of investigation were intimately related (Foucault, 2004b). He recognized that normalization through disciplinarity and individualization depended on the patronage of the modern state. His 1975-76 lectures, which focused on psychiatric practices geared to regulate and protect the “social body” against the dangers of “abnormality”, clearly demonstrated his interest in economies of power that took populations—and not just individuals—as their prime targets of regulation (Foucault, 1997; 1999).

On Foucault’s account, there is a tight link between modern governmentality and the progressive “medicalization” of social structures (1999a; 2003a). The “regulative rationalities” of normality and abnormality expand both the scope of the investigation of what make “deviants” possible and the reach of social and disciplinary interventions (Foucault, 1999). Tight disciplinary regulation of individualized bodies is simply not enough. To

understand the causes of “social abnormalities,” the newly appointed social medical corps and the emerging “social scientists” had to investigate the origins of what constitutes and transmits “abnormality.” In order to do so, they had to scrutinize the childhood of “deviants” and subsequently regulate methods of parenting; they had to investigate the genetic and intergenerational markers that seemed to transmit “social diseases;” they had to study the *milieu* in which deviance seemed more likely to emerge and try to change it. Moreover, the new “social scientists” had to assess the specific *environments* and *relations* that produced new forms of “abnormality.” Thus, they could produce the calculable data needed to generate rationalities of government; ones that would manage *environments* and *relations* in a way that would “conduct the conduct” of people toward normality, freedom and security (Osborne, 1996).

Foucault sees a connection between different disciplinary practices, emerging biopolitical economies of power, and various state apparatuses. But, for Foucault, the state is not the *telos* of politics or its ultimate embodiment. Nor is the state simply a capitalist apparatus of power or reproduction. Other relations appear when the state is analyzed in the way Foucault studied normalization and disciplinarization (Foucault, 2004; 2003): in particular, different economies of power and productions of “truth.” In this way, one can see how the “truth” of state politics is internalized to generate specific modes of subjectivity, types of freedom and patterns of resistance.

Foucault does not avoid the systematic analysis of politics or the problem of the modern state. Rather, he repositions the modern state as a contingent and historical figure within the larger history of the technologies of power and rationalities of government that he calls “governmentality” (Foucault, 2004a). As such, while offering a systematic analysis of the inter-relations of various economies of power, Foucault is neither sacrificing the analytical dimension needed to ground his theorizing claims, nor is he telling us what we should ultimately love, endorse or hate at the end of his analysis.

## Freedom as Otherwise

The supposed “normative silence” in Foucault’s work raises the question of freedom, which is at the root of the second critique to which he was responding. Throughout his work on governmentality, Foucault is examining the ways in which people came to experience “freedom” (and

hence subjectivity) via different practices, rationalities of government and technologies of power. Foucault not only shows that the ways in which we experience “freedom” are contingent, but also reveals that “freedom” could be de-centered from its usual incarnation: the self as a transcendental entity. By underscoring the fact that freedom is primarily constituted and conceptualized through “practices,” Foucault is able to get away from the idea that it is the ontological or aprioristic essence of a trans-historic self. Such an imagined self might be capable of “liberation” from any and all regimes (traditional, cultural or governmental), by virtue of adopting, contesting or self-fashioning practices (Prozorov, 2007). But, such “freedom” is always situated within various—yet *open*—cultural and institutional networks of relational practices and rationalities by which a “free act” becomes subsequently internalized as meaningful by agents of relations—not freedom—who then refer to themselves as agents of *this* or *that* “freedom.”

Does this mean that Foucault is precluding all possibility for individual freedom? Of course not: it rather means that, what we understand by “freedom” (or its liberal rendition “resistance”) is no human quintessence. It suggests that, what we understand as “freedom” emerges through specific, variable historical processes of negotiation over different ethical rationalizations, which in turn operate through specific, localized cultural patterns of relationality. Hence, because these “practices of freedom” are inherently relational (thus reversible), contingent, and highly contextualized, they are not susceptible to any unequivocal definition of what “freedom” ought to be. No governmentality may ever freeze our negotiations over freedom: not because the self is the epitome or locus of some transcendental resistance already pre-supposed by all forms of governmental action, but because no regime of government can ever suppress the unpredictable and forever shifting relations constitutive of our experience of freedom, nor the condition of its own contingency as a particular regime of government. This is how we may better understand Foucault when he asserts that there is no better guarantee for freedom than freedom itself. We can embrace “freedom” without adopting any pre-ordained, transcendental or a-historical conception of it, tied to our current understanding (Tully, 1999: 138).

There is an inherent focus on emancipation in studies of governmentality in that they reveal the contingent conditions of our present history. They do this while simultaneously outlining the possibility for the future to be otherwise, leaving to the next generation the capacity to decide what ought

to be their common future. These studies therefore trust with unprecedented faith our capacity to create better modes of relations and interactions if judged necessary. They put imagination before judgment, and judgment before any dogmatic truth. It is in that sense that Foucault's notion of governmentality re-introduces freedom to politics; not necessarily through an individualized locus of perpetual resistance, but by introducing the historical, contingent and humanly invented existence of varied and multiple forms of rationalities of government. As such, Foucault is positioning human freedom in an inter-relational process of permanent and open negotiations in which we collectively design our various understandings of what it is to be free, what it is to resist, and what it is to dominate or to be dominated. Perhaps Foucault's only normative injunction would be—for us—to be especially wary of any pattern of relations that might freeze the very possibility for relations to be otherwise. Such a pattern would foreclose our inherited gift of an undetermined future by enforcing a truth that could not be otherwise. Foucault is suggesting an open and perpetual renewable project of emancipation.

### **Toward an “Eco-Governmentality”?**

But, what are the implications of the *green* governmentality that has become so much more apparent since Foucault's death? What rationalities and technologies of government are implicit in it? What are the consequences of subscribing to it? These are the questions I would like to investigate in the rest of this chapter.

The theme of “green governmentality” problematizes the (re)introduction of “nature” at the center of Western political rationalities (Darrier, 1999; Luke, 1999; Rutherford, 1999). As such, it proposes that the work of Foucault is of central importance in analyzing the production and circulation of knowledge, technologies, and rationalities of government which appeal to notions of “nature.” More precisely, the variously disseminated eco-rationalities and environmental technologies are viewed as extensions of both the disciplinary networks described by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* and the biopolitics that concern him in his later work. Thus, his concept of biopolitics is enlarged to include all of what is necessary to support “life” through the emergence of various environmental practices and regulations (Luke, 1997; Rutherford, 2007; Darrier, 1999). Two epistemological assumptions are often embedded in such genealogical studies of “nature.” First, it is often suggested that

“nature” appears as meaningless “unless or until particular human beings assign significance to it by interpreting some of its ambivalent signs as meaningful to them” (Luke, 1996). Second, it is said that because humans constantly look at natural patterns in different ways, nature’s meaning will always be multiple, unfixed and constantly shifting (Luke, 1996).

Such assumptions generate no consensus, however, among scholars for whom “nature” refers to primordial “biophysical processes” which would support—and even determine—what we understand by “culture” (Rutherford, 2007). Although we could still argue that this form of objectivism is only one way to understand “nature” among many, I would like to suggest that the project of examining the emergence of ecological rationalities is not necessarily bound to define what nature is *per se*. The project of understanding the relations of power embedded in the competitive formulations of how we ought to understand “nature” does not require us to know what “nature” ultimately is. We only need to examine the “effects” that such formulations have on the social and cultural configurations we are experiencing. This is where Foucault’s concept of “governmentality” becomes useful: not only to explore the dimensions of our experience constituted “by all those ways of reflecting and acting that aimed to shape, manage, regulate the conduct of persons,” but also to repose the problematic of normalization in conjunction with “nature” as it has taken shape in the West over the last three centuries (Rose, 1996; Gordon, 1991; Foucault, 2001a). As Stephanie Rutherford and Eric Darrier suggest, Foucault’s work on governmentality—and more particularly his concept of biopolitics—can be reframed as the study of “eco-politics” when the conditions under which populations are managed are subsumed under larger attempts to manage all of *Life* with the deployment of ecological rationalities of government (Rutherford S., 2007; Darrier, 1999). Let me offer three examples of such reframing.

### **The Governmentality of In-betweens**

First, we can expand Foucault’s analysis of governmentality to investigate how the ordering of “things” progressively included variables such as “life,” “health,” “sustainability” and “environment,” to generate new rationalities of government aimed at making visible the relations *between* “things” via the production of ecological rationalities of government. As such, we can see that these rationalities not only emerged within the context of a crisis over deforestation and pollution in Europe (that is, in an already constituted state-like environment), but also in the context of

colonial expansion, which was conceived as a solution to such problems (Moore, 2006). Thus, the emergence of these rationalities appears intimately related to the expansion of Venetian, French, Dutch and English maritime powers, all competing for commercial activities on strategic locations which included oceanic island colonies and various plantations particularly sensitive to deforestation and soil erosion. In fact, problems of the latter sort led to new environmental awareness in relation to land specificity, botany, meteorology and map-making, for instance (Grove, 1995: 475). Grove insists that it was in the tropical colonies that scientists “first came to a realization of the extraordinary speed at which people, and Europeans in particular, could transform and destroy their natural environment” (Grove, 1998). In between the production of such knowledge and the development of the skills required to exploit distant colonies emerged the multiple relations of power/knowledge that progressively shaped the “ecologization” of our understanding of politics (Moore, 2006; Headrick, 1988; Crosby, 1986). Such relations can be traced not only in the European colonial annexations and the environmental innovations they induced, but also in the growing concerns that such activities stimulated toward the non-European “other” found in these Tropical regions against which the “moderns Europeans” have shaped their identity in important respects. Such relations and concerns all contributed to a “global perception” of natural and intercultural interconnectedness (Grove, 1995: 476; Goodie, 2006: 33). By expanding Foucault’s reading of governmentality to include “eco-governmentality,” we can deepen our understanding of the “problem of government.” The latter extends to these “in-between relations” that have connected the different theaters of governmentality via a primordial “environment” that is increasingly colonized by various power/knowledge relations in a growing attempt to governmentalize “nature.” Thus, *contra* Lipschutz’s argument—that if governmentality is about management, then environmental politics and praxis are not, for such politics challenge the very constitutive basis of neoliberal governmentality (2004: 242)—we can dispute that the emergence of Western environmental preoccupations were intimately tied with economical expansion from the start. Indeed, the spreading of managerial colonialism and the shaping of various political apparatus to “govern at distance” have established, from the fifteenth-century onward, the global networking from which the so-called “advanced neoliberalism rationalities of government” will later blossom.



## **From Biopolitics to Eco-governmentality**

Second, by expanding Foucault's analysis of biopolitics to include eco-governmentality, we can investigate the various connections between the two concepts as they framed modern governmentality. We can notice, for example, that the concept of "environment" was also shaped through the emergence of statistics and inductive modes of reasoning, leading to computer sciences and predictive models, all working to make predictable, and thus controllable, the random and chaotic relations that such a concept entails (Foucault, 2004a; Hacking, 2006; Rose, 1999). Hence, following Foucault's insights on the political significance of statistics, we can explore the ways in which the progressive mathematization of "nature" has enabled various ecological rationalities and technologies to produce a wide range of "norms" which refer to "nature" not only to supplement the power of the "sovereignty-law" apparatus, but also to shape a series of "truth-claims" about ecological modes of conduct by which rational individuals are expected to govern themselves and others (Desjardins, 1999; Ashford and Caldwell, 2008).

Moreover, by exploring the ways in which the concept of "population" (as a body-species) and "environment" (as its territorial necessity) relate to each other, we can track the emergence of different rationalities of government making use of various organic, growth and health metaphors to explain the relations between the two notions through the formation of scientific disciplines such as "ecology." It is a well-known fact that "ecology" and its associated ethics emerged largely as a reaction against the "anti-naturalism" ascribed to utilitarian models of science: that is, as a reaction wanting to expand the reductive and utterly too mechanical focus of these models, while keeping laboratory methods intact (Goodie, 2006: 36). Less known is the brilliant observation of Jo-Ann Goodie, which points toward the affiliation between Darwin's theory of evolution and the emergence of "ecology" to explain the resolution of this ambiguity, highlighting as such the leading influence of what will become a science examining: "everything in the physical and biological environment that affected survival in the broadest sense" (Goodie, 2006: 37; Hawkins, 1997: 136).

Deeply influenced by such ecological representations, the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries witnessed the emergence of different rationalities of government working actively at bridging medical, social, economical, biological and environmental arguments to formulate different "evolutionary

patterns” in which not only life, but the management of everything which includes life, becomes the overriding criterion guiding political actions (Robert, 1938; Campbell, 2007; Schneider, 1990; Jones, 1986). Such “evolutionary patters” significantly contributed to shaping a “modern culture” that perceived itself as “naturally” entitled to dominate “inferiors ones” according to an evolutionary logic in which only the well-adapted, wealthy, technologically-advanced “organisms” should survive (Hawkins, 1997). The economical translation of this argument progressively asked that all “natural resources”—including human populations—came to be envisioned as “commodities” and/or “state resources” that had to be monitored, protected and enhanced by a growing variety of “eco-experts” working for the most part in coordination with state actors (Broberg and Roll-Hansen, 1996). Entire societies were consequently analyzed and compared through the scope of their working productivity, vitality, good behavior, adaptability and economical powers, leading to the development of racial and eugenic practices based on class, sexual orientations, geographical locations and ethnological and technological distinctions in order to rank the evolutionary continuum of the human race (Foucault, 1999: 229; Rose, 2007; Agamben, 1998; Bauman, 1989).

It is thus obvious that the concept of “population” or even “life” could not have supported alone the articulation of biopolitics that, according to Foucault, operated through the expansion of medical rationalities, the deployment of state racism, security apparatuses, statistical inferences and the emergence of political economy (2004a; 2004b). By deepening the “evolutionary argument,” we can therefore broaden the study of an assemblage of frameworks in which everything necessary to “life”—and not only “life” captured through the concept of population and race—had to be considered through the political integration of various ecological sciences (Foucault, 1997: 52). In other words, we can enlarge the problematization of modern governmentality by suggesting that the problems of “life,” “environment” and “government” have now coincided with the emergence of “eco-politics,” crystallizing as such a nexus of power\knowledge which deeply reorganizes in a relational way the three movements constitutive of modern governmentality, namely: government, population, and political economy (Rutheford, 1999a, 1999b; Luke, 1999; Darrier, 1999; Goodie, 2006).

## Eco-governmentality: Intensification and transformations

Finally, by expanding our analysis of governmentality to include the study of eco-governmentality, we can appreciate the intensification of “the immanent logic” running across the different rationalities of government analyzed by Foucault. We can study this intensification in the emerging ecological rationalities of government in the context of “globalization,” which, according to Law and Barnett, “has become the grand narrative which justifies the end of all other master narratives of social change” (Redcliff, 2002). By the “immanent logic” of governmentality, I refer to the idea implicit in *raison d'état* that upholds inherent political principles that must be kept separate from any onto-theological tutelage (Foucault, 2004a: 263; Malette, 2006: 78). The idea is recast in notions of “civil society,” “economy,” and “private property,” conceived as autonomous domains entitled to their own rights against the Political. Following a similar logic, it appears that contemporary ecological rationalities of government reproduce both the *derivative* and *dualistic* implications attached to any political rationality which appeals to deeper or more intrinsic levels of reality as bearers of their own truths: “nature” is something in front of which we stand and to which we should listen<sup>2</sup>. As such, while these ecological rationalities open new realms of political intervention with unprecedented reach, they also deploy new limits to human action: this time, by arguing that the “natural world” which supports all of life has intrinsic rules that no government or human industry should violate (Agar, 2001).

However, by problematizing the planet as a “dynamic field” in which human and non-human actions are inherently interconnected, these ecological rationalities are also questioning some of the key concepts of Western political thought (Lipschutz, 2004: 36). Such rationalities often question deep ontological and epistemological assumptions which support; for example, the ways in which Western political thought has conceived

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<sup>2</sup> I use the terms *derivative* and *dualistic* following the excellent definitions formulated by John M. Meyer (2001): “On the one hand, a number argue that the distinguishing characteristic of Western thought is that politics (and human culture in general) is completely divorced from nature. I refer to this as the *dualist* account.... On the other hand, many view Western political thought as replete with normative theories derived from conception on nature, whether that conception be the teleology of Aristotelians, the clock-like mechanism of early modern scientists, or the invisible hand of Darwinian selection. I refer to this as the derivative interpretation” (2001: 2).

the limits of a “territoriality” by delineating the boundaries of a sovereignty which in turn justifies the integrity of such limits by making the territory a national possession. In fact, by articulating a number of ecological problems, these rationalities are not only criticizing the modern state, but also questioning the predominant capitalist model of socialization upon which it now operates (Lipschutz, 2004: 243; Kuehls, 1996: 130; 1998: 48). Ecological preoccupations, which include the loss of biodiversity and the possibility of conflict over “natural resources” we believed to be inexhaustible, are now demanding not only a better management of ecological settings, but some kind of co-ordination that would target the environmental and economical equilibrium and sustainability of the entire planet (Luke, 1997). Economically speaking, such preoccupations can still be conveyed by the question the World Commission on Environment and Development asked twenty-one years ago: how can we sustain a next century’s world of twice as many people while relying on the same environment (Kuehls, 1996: 75)? To put it otherwise, the future seems to depend on there being an environment capable of providing for human needs at a time when channels that allowed the deferral of environmental and other resource extraction problems to some “distant land” are closing at a rapid pace, putting once again the so-called global economy as the leading preoccupation (Kuehls, 1998). Consequently, in a world where even to think globally and act locally is a privilege, the global problem remains a Western problem in many ways, if not the pinnacle of a colonial enterprise which started centuries ago (Wilmer, 1998). A solution is indeed desperately needed to create a sustainable future; one that will allow the so-called post-industrial societies to keep a level of comfort and opulence facilitated by centuries of colonial appropriation, forced integration, slavery and so on, while providing a rationale for non-western societies to embrace the modern lifestyle predominantly shaped in the West (the free market, mass consumption, the liberal democratic state, and so on) and a formula for moderation to maintain the environmental conditions required for this way of life to continue. “Eco-politics” appears as the domain in which this predicament is presented.

Since the path-breaking works of Aldo Leopold (1966), numerous ecological thinkers have articulated different solutions. They range from the creation of a new global order (Ward and Dubos, 1972) to centralized authoritarianism through state institutions (Ophuls, 1977; Hardin, 1977); hybrid versions of the two, which project liberal or republican practices onto a larger scale (Ferry, 1992); communalism (Heilbroner, 1974);

anarchism (Bookchin, 1991); and “partnership” between humans and non-human actors based on an epistemological revolution in Western thought (Merchant, 2003; Kuehls, 1998; Serre, 1990; Latour, 2004). These solutions vary from the assertion of various ecological problems which the “Keynesian-Westphalian frame” is no longer able to contain or address (thus requiring the creation of a centralized form of “global Leviathan” capable of planetary coercion on these matters<sup>3</sup>) to the contention that, while we ought to believe that humans are not likely to comply without coercion to eco-friendly behaviors, creating a “world government” is too dangerous and/or inappropriate for such predicaments. Others, while starting from similar ecological assertions, condemn the predominantly Western political models by which we have conceived politics and social regulation. These solutions often pledge new ways of understanding ecological diversity in terms of the intrinsic value of “life” and the possibilities of mutualism or other forms of de-centered cooperative networking capable of freeing us from established patterns of hierarchical relationships.

By glancing at what constitutes only one of the fractures that oppose the various ecological rationalities of government, it becomes clear that the ground upon which our conception of the political had developed has been disturbed. The eruption of nature into politics seems to demand new rationalities of government and ethics of relationality (Curry, 2006; Desjardins, 1999). Such demands generate both insecurities and anticipations by exposing, directly or indirectly, how contingent and dependent our ways to think politics are in relation to the specific contexts in which they take place. On the one hand, these insecurities translate as much into neo-realistic approaches for which the centralization of power and the monopolization of institutionalized violence appear as the only solutions to resolve the various crises humanity may encounter, as they do into the populist argument that the emergence of ecological consciousness is a by-product of modernity and as such an evolution of this superb democratic *ethos* that Western civilizations have crafted to save the world from its “barbarity” (Ferry, 1992). On the other hand, we find thinkers who never despaired of our dormant revolutionary *ethos* and never doubted the return of a grand narrative, powerful enough to sweep away both our Western realist and Cartesian straitjacket and the neo-pyrrhonist approaches and their de-centered or “rhizoid” visions of freedom as perpetual of shifting sites of resistance, which are all too compatible with

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<sup>3</sup> The expression “Keynesian-Westphalian frame” is from Nancy Fraser (2007).

the capitalist and other hierarchical relations of power in their constant remodeling. For these revolutionaries, “nature” came as the ultimate savior, the ultimate ground to cut off the seeking of any other philosophical grounding for actions, namely the only real and monotheistically true ground: the Earth (Weston, 1994; cited in Meyer 2001).

By exploring the impacts of these various ecological considerations, we can thus explore not only the intensification but also the transformation of “the immanent logic” that we have described earlier. We can better understand an ecological logic that reorganizes in profound ways the dualistic and derivative assumptions embedded in our understanding of the Political. We can better understand the re-articulation of new sets of distinctions operating to make cogent the justifications of the disciplinary/regulative ecological enterprises, and the fabrication of a more inclusive concept by which the regulation of the living can actually expand to everything which is necessary to life: namely, an interconnected and primordial *environment*, which the technologically-advanced societies and their scientists are now in a position to predict, police and regulate (Osborne, 1996: 116-7).

Hence, from what comes across as various indicators of an emerging “ecological episteme,” the “problem of government” seems to have reached a new “critical phase.” Once again, the dragon is about to change skin. Like new scales replacing the old ones, the contemporary rationalities of government appear to be converging toward a notion larger than “life,” “population,” “race” or “economics” to reformulate their legitimacy to act. These rationalities of government are now zooming in on the necessity of governing the relational tissue which bounds all and everything, which support all living and non-living beings alike, and which make inside/outside boundaries a secondary question. This Mother-Monad is “nature” in all its complexity, diversity and unity, namely a global environment we all share, human and non-human actors/subjects/objects alike.

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**SECTION VI:**  
**CONTROL AND THE PRISON**  
**INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX**

# TECHNOLOGIES OF THE BODY, TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF: HOUSE ARREST AS NEO-LIBERAL GOVERNANCE<sup>1</sup>

WILLIAM G. STAPLES  
AND STEPHANIE K. DECKER

“On the one hand, we govern others and ourselves according to what we take to be true about who we are, what aspects of our existence should be worked upon, how, with what means, and to what ends. On the other hand, the ways in which we govern and conduct ourselves gives rise to different ways of producing truth.”

—Mitchell Dean (1999, p. 18).

“It’s about remembering. Remembering things...it conditions us not to forget. It immediately puts consequences on us if we do, if we do forget.... You are accountable for everything you do at every minute of everyday or they have to know where you’re at. And it’s your responsibility to make sure they know. It’s not their responsibility to track you down... You learn to be accountable for yourself.”

—“Julie,” on living under house arrest (2001).

Julie is a thirty-two-year-old European American and a divorced parent of three young children who works as a manager at a fast food outlet. She had been convicted of a drug offense and is one of the two dozen people we interviewed living under house arrest in and around a Midwestern metropolitan area.<sup>2</sup> This was Julie’s second experience with house arrest,

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<sup>1</sup> This is article is a modified version of our chapter, “Technologies of the Body, Technologies of the Self: House Arrest as Neo-Liberal Governance” in *Surveillance and Governance: Crime Control Today*, edited by M. Deflem, 131-149. Sociology of Crime, Law and Deviance, Volume 10. Bingley, UK: Emerald/JAI Press, 2008. Portions are reproduced with kind permission from the publisher.

<sup>2</sup> The names used here are fictitious. The research protocol was conducted within the ethical and procedural guidelines set out by the Human Subjects Committee of

having been sentenced to “doing time at home” (Ball, Huff, and Lilly, 1988) in another state; all together she has spent more than two months being electronically monitored. Officials from the Department of Corrections attached a small computerized unit to her phone line, and while under house arrest, Julie is required to respond to random phone calls to verify that she is home when she is scheduled to be. The calls demand that Julie answers the phone within the first three rings, says her name and the time, and blows into an alcohol tester built into the machine. In addition, the device takes her picture and compares it to a reference photograph stored on a central computer.

The practice of electronically monitored “house arrest” has come to play an important role in the criminal justice system of the United States (Harrison and Karberg, 2003; MacKenzie, 2006; Harrison and Karberg, 2003; Newman, 1999). We contend that this electronic monitoring program is consistent with Foucault’s insights into both the workings of “disciplinary power” (Foucault, 1979; 1995) and “governmentality” (Foucault, 1979; 1991) and with the self-governing notions of a contemporary, conservative, neo-liberal ideology and mentality (Rose, 1996; 1999; Barry, Osborne, and Rose, 1996; Dean, 1999). Our analysis of offender narratives identifies a theme we call “transforming the self” that illustrates the ways in which some “clients” experience house arrest as a set of discourses and practices that encourages them to govern themselves by regulating their own bodies and conduct. These self-governing capacities may be characterized as “enterprise,” “autonomy,” and “ethics” (Rose, 1996: 30, 153-5; see also Foucault, 1991).

The academic literature dealing with house arrest has offered, with few exceptions, under-theorized, quantitative studies that have centered on whether or not the treatment is effective at reducing recidivism and/or assessing its relative cost when compared to other sanctions (see for example Ulmer, 2001). However, our goal is not to debate the merits of electronic monitoring as effective correctional strategy but rather to explore how the penalty of house arrest is made meaningful for those subjected to it and investigate how this sanction actually operates in routine, everyday ways (Sarat, 1998; Garth and Sarat, 1998). In this way we contend that governmentality studies should further explore the lived experiences of individuals and that critical criminologists should consider

governmentality theory as a way of understanding social control and disciplinary practices in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Theorizing House Arrest**

There is considerable evidence in the United States of the emergence of a new regime of social control; this regime retains many of the modern themes and practices of the past but has also developed new methods of control and accountability that are both a product and reflection of postmodern culture (Staples, 2000) and the movement toward “conservative, neo-liberal” governance in criminal justice (O’Malley, 2002; see also Garland, 2001). House arrest with electronic monitoring is consistent with this new regime. It incorporates a number of elements of modern “total institutions” (Goffman, 1961; Staples and Decker, 2008b) but is quintessentially postmodern in design and implementation. In addition, while the disciplinary regime of house arrest sets the boundaries or, in a number of the clients’ words, the “structure” in their lives, it is largely left up to them to monitor themselves—to keep to their schedules, work or go to school as required, meet with officials when scheduled, offer themselves up for drug tests, administer their own breathalyzers, and literally turn themselves in if they deviate from the conditions of their contract.

We see this aspect of house arrest as a tactic of what Foucault (1991) called “governmentality,” or the *practices* of governing, the techniques and technologies of governing, and the rationalities and strategies invested to shape, guide, and direct the conduct of others, which make human life a domain of power and knowledge. As both a disciplinary strategy and a “technology of government,” the practice of house arrest is designed to treat the client’s body as an object to be monitored and assessed, broken down, analyzed, and improved upon. It is a program “imbued with aspirations for the shaping of conduct in the hope of producing certain desired effects and averting certain undesired ones” (Rose, 1999: 52). In other words, it attempts to normalize the participants and to produce docility. The individual becomes both an object and subject of knowledge—not simply repressed but shaped and formed within this discursive field and social practice. From this operation of power/knowledge come subjectivity and the formation of the self. Foucault (1997) also explored the idea of “technologies of the self” or patterns of practices that “permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their bodies

and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves..." (225). Individuals equipped with such technologies may develop the self-governing capability that brings their conduct into alignment with broader moral, social, and political objectives (Rose, 1996: 155; Barry, Osborne, and Rose, 1996).

As O'Malley (2002) argues, the U.S. criminal justice system may be differentiated as a hybrid of neo-liberal principles—characterized by "...the rational choice subject, the superiority of markets to deliver efficiencies and goods, freedom of choice, a 'revised autonomy' of the enterprising self, the centrality of innovation and of enterprising individualism, the small and enabling state"—and backed up by a conservative, "three strikes" incapacitation mentality (216). According to Rose (1996), this type of neo-liberal regime spawns and utilizes certain strategies, tactics, and regulations that encourage the self-governing capabilities of subjects. These capacities include 1) *Enterprise*, or the array of rules for the conduct of one's everyday existence that includes energy, initiative, ambition, calculation, and personal responsibility (Rose, 1996: 154); 2) *Autonomy*, or taking control of activities, defining a set of goals, and planning a course of action to satisfy the needs of existence through one's own powers (Rose, 1996: 155); and 3) *Ethics*, understood as the domain of practical advice as to how we conduct ourselves in the various aspects of our everyday existence and the ways by which we come to construe, decipher, and act upon ourselves in relation to the true and false, the permitted and the forbidden, the desirable and undesirable (Foucault, 1991; Rose, 1996: 153).

The house arrest program discussed here embodies this hybrid form of neo-liberalism where participants are "responsibilized" (Lemke, 2001) into taking control of their own behavior. It seeks to govern clients *through* the limited freedom it grants them but always with the constant threat that this freedom may be taken away. In other words, it governs its subjects by structuring and controlling the possible field of action where they are "free" to make the "right" choices and in which they learn to govern themselves. Thus the clients are "not merely 'free to choose' but *obliged to be free*, to understand and enact their lives in terms of choice" (Rose, 1999: 87). They are treated as rational actors who respond to positive incentives and negative consequences. The program is touted by officials as being highly efficient and cost-effective as it deploys private sector technologies and makes program participants pay for the use of the equipment as well as their drug tests. Clients must work, most at least



forty hours a week, not at public sector “make work” jobs but in private sector jobs. If clients do not already have a job, one is arranged for them. Thus they are rendered docile not through their isolation and segregation from society but rather through their integration into everyday, labor/wage and commodity exchange relations. The discourse of house arrest, articulated by both staff and clients, is one where the values of work, self-help, self-control, responsibility, and accountability are celebrated.

In the fall of 2001 Staples conducted face-to-face, open-ended interviews with twenty-three clients in a house arrest program in a metropolitan area in the Midwest. The interviews took approximately thirty to forty minutes to conduct. The final sample included twenty-three individuals: fifteen European Americans (twelve males and three females) and eight African Americans (one female and seven males). The mean age was thirty-three with a range of eighteen to seventy-four.<sup>3</sup>

### **Transforming the Self**

For most of the clients we spoke with, a sentence to house arrest produced a number of seemingly contradictory feelings and emotions. On the one hand, many complained about the intrusive and “disciplinary” aspects of the program, such as the random phone calls and the rigid schedule, as well as the cost of participating and the stress on them and other household members (Staples, 2005). On the other hand, nearly all the clients began their interviews by declaring that, for a variety of reasons, house arrest was “better” than the alternative of sitting in the county jail. Some of those reasons included being able to sleep in their own bed, cook their own food, work and earn money, and to remain with family. Some described other purported benefits of the house arrest program, which we call the tutelage aspects of the program: it imposed a necessary “structure” onto their lives, it taught them various life skills, and it helped them become, in their words, “responsible” and “accountable.” Therefore, we hear in the narratives of clients the adoption of various modes of evaluating and acting upon themselves as they seemingly develop the self-governing capabilities of “enterprise,” “autonomy,” and “ethics” (Rose, 1996).

For example, “Mark” is an African American male in his early twenties who attended a local community college. He had been convicted of driving

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<sup>3</sup> For more details on the collection of data for this article, please see Staples and Decker, 2008a.

while intoxicated and manslaughter—the result of a car wreck. In his interview, Mark revealed a number of self-governing capacities he claims to have taken from the program:

I'm probably working more than I've ever worked in my life, but I don't mind it since that's what [the program] gave me was a work ethic because I didn't have any since I was just a little spoiled kid who didn't do anything. And, that is just the whole reason they put you on it, to add that structure to your life, that you're saying, 'I go to work, I come home, and that's the place I need to go, that's what I put that on my schedule and that's it.' You're supposed to have that schedule for your life, and life is supposed to be full of appointments and schedules, and, but I mean life is supposed to have that structure and I guess that's what it's suppose to do.

Echoing an ethical stance on his own behavior, Mark told us, “Man, I don't feel any animosity towards being on house arrest 'cause I have to live up to my responsibilities which I guess this place really teaches that, you have to live up to certain things if you've made those mistakes, live up towards them. And so, I mean, I'm actually happy everyday.”

“Marge” is a European American in her thirties who works in a fast food restaurant—a job arranged by the program—and is the mother of five children. She told us that she hates to be monitored twenty-four hours a day, but “You know, it's better than sitting in jail.” Marge went on to speak of the opportunity for self-sufficiency, lessons and skills learned, and personal accountability that the program permitted and encouraged. “At least under house arrest you can provide for your family,” she offered, “and if you're not out there doing what you're not supposed to be doing then it's not a problem anyway.” She continued:

And, it all, actually, sometimes people that have had problems in the past with maybe drugs or alcohol or situations like that, if they know what's more important then, house arrest can actually be a beneficial thing to a person. You know, for one, you're proving to the community that you can survive, be a part of the community without, you know, I don't know, it's, it's not... I'll be the first to tell you that I hate the phone calls, especially in the middle of the night, whatever, but it's a lot better than sitting in jail, at least you still have the opportunity to be with your family and provide for your family, and do the things that you need to do.

When asked to reflect on the relationship between house arrest and jail, Marge stated:

Even if you have been here at The Center, when you get out of here, I mean, you learn to appreciate a lot more, and, actually, this has all been a really good experience for me, because, I mean, it's taught me budgeting money, even with house arrest, I now have to have a payment in, you know, so I mean, this is part of my probation condition, so, you know, actually you have to sit down and budget your money too...so, it's really been a learning experience, and, I've actually benefited from it.

“Reggie,” an African American male in his thirties, married with two children, told us about how he ended up under house arrest and, like Marge, evoked a sense of personal responsibility that he linked to the community and the larger social order. He stated:

So I'm thinking, instead of him [the judge] giving me another thirty days and him taking me away from my family, I have a house note to pay, taking me from my house and my family is hurting my family also, so I think the judge was lenient and said, 'He doesn't need to be in jail, let's do, let's give him house arrest. And then by then I can get a better evaluation and he can be on his way.' So it's satisfying everyone, the judge, the community, you know, everything.

And later in the interview, Reggie accepts his own liability for what has happened to him and sets his sights on moving forward and taking control of his own life:

I assume responsibility for being at that bar. So if I assume responsibility for being at the bar, I have no one to be mad at about this house arrest situation but me. That means I have to do what's necessary to get past it. Now, if I want to be mad about the situation and, 'this isn't fair,' then I'm not assuming responsibility and then therefore house arrest is going to be a pain in the ass for me. Let's get past it and go forward, this is what I need to do.” He added, “And if you don't conform and meet the, uh, contract that you sign, can't say you didn't know, 'cause you signed it.

When asked to describe her experience under house arrest, Julie said, “It was uh, [pause] structured. It was a lot better than being in jail, which was the alternative for me.” Julie went on to tell us about a specific skill she developed and how this led to personal accountability:

It's [pause] remembering. Remembering things, um, 'cause a lot of times in the normal daily life it is difficult. So we forget things and it conditions us not to forget. It immediately puts consequences on us if we do, if we do forget. But when you're out on the street normally you forget 'oh well' little things. Here you pay the consequences if you forget anything. I

forgot to find out one time here in The Center and lost my passes for three weeks. You forget something on house arrest you could be called back here and sent straight back to The Center. They don't give you chances on house arrest. It's immediate accountability. There is no second chances, there is no 'well, let me think about it.' No...You are accountable for everything you do at every minute of every day or they have to know where you're at. And it's your responsibility to make sure they know. It's not their responsibility to track you down. It's part of what it is going out, you learn to be accountable for yourself.

Later in the interview, Julie evoked the performative technology of the confession (Foucault, 1997) telling us that she informs others of her circumstances:

Staples: So, a number of people know that you are on house arrest?

Julie: Yeah, everybody that I associate with, everybody that I talk to knows what's going on with me. I'm not ashamed to admit what I've done 'cause I'm paying for it. I took accountability for what I did and the responsibility for what I did and I'm trying to put it all behind me and move on and they are trying to help me. They are trying to help me put all behind me and making sure that I stay on the right track.

When Julie described the routine of house arrest, she identified what we see as the tutelage aspect of the program and the acceptance of docile subjectivity. She stated, "It's a conditioning program, that's what all this is. They're conditioning you to live like, better on life's terms. It does work. Doing the things you say you're going to do and uh, kind of uh, learning to respect authority." She goes on to compare the house arrest to a work release program in which she participated in another state: "That was plain, straight up, just a work release program. They didn't try to recondition you at all."

Finally, when asked to summarize her experience, Julie offered, "It helps. It says it all right there. It's guidelines is all." She went on to elaborate how she saw the need for the tutelage function to be embedded in the everyday lives of arrestees and how this offered them the opportunity to develop personal autonomy and control over their own lives:

It's just a wonderful program, an alternative to jail. I mean, this is a good program [The Center] also but the house arrest...like I said, it keeps you controlled more in your environment you're used to. The environment that you need to be controlled in, the environment that you're going to be at out there. In here is not where you're going to be forever. That environment is where you need help controlling, not this one. I think the

house arrest is a much better alternative to The Center, in my opinion. You know, this is much better than jail. But I really believe that a lot more people should go to house arrest because that's where they need to be controlled in their environment, in their own home. That's where they need the help, not in here... You can't get a much better chance at organizing your life than house arrest. And I've done it; I know it can be done.

Similar to Julie's notions of transferring the lessons and skills learned from the program her everyday life, "Duane," a thirty-six-year-old African American who has a wife and three children and works as a night grocer, offered the following when asked to describe his experience under house arrest:

Um [pause] it's very uncomfortable. This is the first time, hopefully the last, um, it's uh, it's an experience of that I feel that I can live by and learn from it, you know, apply it to my, you know, my life as I go on... I think that uh, as far as me being, um, prompt. As far as being on time for something and being responsible, uh, as far as taking care of business. Uh, if I went and, you know, doing that before, um, I think it would kind of help me in the future to, uh, you know, to be more responsible. Uh, more business, as far as taking care of business and that sort of thing.

Duane's "taking care of business" evokes the enterprising and autonomous skills necessary to navigate daily life. He goes on to account for his past behavior and suggest an ethical narrative in the need to "get a life" (i.e., to govern oneself) or else be subjected to the disciplinary regime of authorities:

You know, uh, I guess, um, like I said, it's a valuable lesson. You know, no one can make my bed for me, I made it for myself. Whatever I brought on myself here is basically something that I have to deal with. Learn from it. You know, if you don't learn from your mistakes then, uh, better get a life then 'cause you'll always be in a predicament.

When asked if he had any final thoughts, Duane turned to the energy, initiative, and ambition of "enterprise":

It's not bad, you know, just like with everything else, it can stand some improvement, on the way they, um, handle some situations. So far, so good with me. I want to be honest and just give it one hundred percent. I just hope that the program's honest with me and gives me a chance.

“Chris” is a thirty-two-year-old European American who works as a forklift driver; he is divorced with three children but lives with his parents. Chris also characterized the program “structure” imposed on him as both constraining and enabling:

Staples: So you feel it’s effective in terms of watching or controlling you?  
Chris: Yeah, sure. Yeah, sure it does. It, uh, like I said earlier, it just uh, it’s effective in, uh, putting structure in your life. Putting, you know, living by a schedule, you know, instead of just... Basically, I mean it’s not, it is kind of controlling. But, uh, that could be a good thing in a lot of areas.

When asked to reflect on the difference between jail and house arrest, Chris said:

Yeah, it’s more of, uh, like you know really I think they ought to do it more often to people. Because instead having someone sit in a jailhouse where they can’t make money. You know, some people need to be there because their attitude is, ‘I don’t care—I’m going to go out and do the same thing I did before.’ Well, they need to be in the jail. But a lot of people, you know, realize that they made a mistake and they can get out and, you know, work and pay off fines or whatever. Child support, whatever they have. And uh, but at the same time still have structure in their life and be, you know, on a monitor system where, ‘Hey, we can tell if you’ve been drinking’ or whatnot. I think it’s a good system.

Here and below, Chris suggests that those who refuse to submit to authority and remain recalcitrant need to be incarcerated, whereas enterprising and self-governing individuals can employ the “structure” of the system to their own advantage and satisfy the needs of their existence through their own powers. He also connects the “structure” to his own ethical behavior and aspiring self image:

Chris: And so uh, it’s a, but it keeps me, ‘What time are you going to be home?’ ‘I’ll be home at eleven fifteen,’ you know, and that makes me follow my schedule to where I have to go out and be back by eleven fifteen. And so, you’re basically keeping your word.

Staples: Any final thoughts?

Chris: Well, let me think. Just basically I think it’s a, uh, it’s a good rehabilitation program. Basically, that’s what I’d call it and uh, as a matter of fact where uh, you know, being uh, getting structure back in you life and uh living uh, living as you say you’re going to live. Doing the things you say you’re going to do and uh, kind of uh, learning to respect authority. Learning to, uh, humbling yourself. Basically, that’s what I’ve learned from it, and, when I get off in seventeen days, it’s going to take

you know, transfer the structure that I had in this program into my everyday life when somebody's not monitoring me everyday. And uh, it helps you in doing that.

“Charles,” a thirty-two-year-old African American who lives with his fiancée, works in sales for a living. He did not reveal what he had done to be sentenced to a month of house arrest of which he had served two weeks when we spoke. When asked to sum up his feelings about it, Charles focused on the themes consistent with enterprise, self-rule, and ethical behavior:

The biggest thing about this whole program thing is its accountability. I mean, if a person's not used to being accountable for things, that's probably why they got in trouble. You know and I think that's something that maybe relies a lot on. I got to get back to accountability. I'm accountable for my actions, I'm accountable for my whereabouts, I'm accountable for everything I do. And that falls into responsibility, so if you want to be responsible, you have to stay accountable.

“Dusty,” a European American in his twenties who lives with his brother and a roommate, works at a car wash while trying to complete a technical degree at a local community college. After serving more than sixty days under house arrest, he says that the routine of house arrest “keeps me honest.” When asked to elaborate on the idea of house arrest, Dusty suggested that the social control function actually creates a kind of space, an “opportunity” for some to reflect on and come to understand themselves. He stated:

Well, in my opinion, it's the type of situation where they're limiting your activities so you have an opportunity to think about what you're going to do where you have just a little bit of freedom, but also restrictions, keeping you from doing what you shouldn't be doing. Kind of see things from that perspective. You know, you'll maybe make some proper decisions. That's where I see it.

Later in the interview, Dusty declared that he has a course of action and a set of goals for himself now—a different way of being:

I have a better idea on what I want to do and what I'm going to change about myself. I had a drug problem myself and as far as my hang-up and places that I hung out, the people I hung out with, and a lot of times, I had a poor use of time. I just think it's, think maybe I'll make some better decisions as far as how I use my time and where I go...Oh, you know I understand why they do it and it seems to make sense to me because uh,

you know, I think initially if I wasn't on it, maybe, you know, I think being on it I have an opportunity to make some better decisions. Instead of being just left free from a restrictive environment I have opportunity, a window to think. I can't say I like it but I say it's probably the best thing for me.

Finally, we spoke with "Ernie," a married forty-one-year-old African American who worked as a general laborer in a factory. He had twice been convicted of drinking and driving and was half way through a thirty-day sentence to house arrest.

Staples: OK, maybe you could tell me what it's like living under house arrest. How do you experience the whole thing?

Ernie: It's, it, it's better than being here [The Center] and it's not really that bad. You know, they call and you don't have to talk to anyone so you just talk to the machine which is great, you know, so you just blow in the machine. You know, no drugs, no alcohol present in the house, which ain't no problem. I've been sober for over nine years, you know, so I don't see that as a problem. I go to my AA meetings and I speak about it and I, you know, and my group is very supportive. Told me if I have any problems to let them know. My boss is very supportive. He told me he wanted me to make it through this.

Ernie, like Julie above, describes the transformative effects of the confessional technology of the twelve-step program he participates in. Commenting on his experience at The Center, Ernie feels that it helped him gain self control. "Yeah, in The Center, it's a wonderful program, it's just you have to deal with so many different attitudes and personalities and you know, it taught me my patience. That's one thing this taught me." Later he adds, "Umm, like I says, think before you act, think before you act on your impulse thing like I did."

In his final comments, Ernie offers, in his own words, how "modern individuals are not merely 'free to choose' but *obliged to be free*, to understand and enact their lives in terms of choice" (Rose, 1999: 87) in acquiring the skills to negotiate life's terms.

Staples: Any final thoughts about the experience that you want to share?

Ernie: You should weigh out the consequences 'cause sometimes you don't end up getting lucky like this, you just go to jail. You don't have the privilege of making money, you know, and another thing it taught me how to collect my money a little bit better. I was kind of doing that before, but now I think that I've got better at it 'cause you know, I've practiced it for three months. It's like embedded now.



## Conclusion

The house arrest program we studied may well be seen as a “disciplinary technology” (Foucault, 1977) and we have analyzed this aspect of the program elsewhere (see Staples and Decker, 2008a). As participants have attested, it is an intrusive, regimented regime of control that is backed up by the constant threat of incarceration. And yet, rather than simply coerce clients into behaving, this productive form of disciplinary power operates as a kind of training program intended to engender certain “self-steering mechanisms” (Foucault, 1997) by which participants may come to experience, understand, judge, and conduct themselves. In this neo-liberal model of governing, subjects are “confronted with a field of incentives suggesting ways of utilizing individual skills and circumstances maximizing their own ‘life chances’ while minimizing their cost to the state” (Tuschling and Engemann, 2006: 452).

Our analysis of the house arrest client narratives presented here offers fresh insights into the ways in which the strategies, tactics, and regulations of neo-liberal governance are actually understood and experienced by the individuals they target. Did the house arrest clients we interviewed really develop the ostensibly self-governing qualities they seemingly professed to have adopted? Will they go on to be less troublesome citizens, newly reconstituted liberal-democratic subjects? We cannot say; we can only report what they told us. Goffman (1961) suggests that those spending time in institutions tend to internalize the idea that they will be reformed or will learn something from the experience because they do not want to think that this time in their life has been simply wasted. These clients may have adopted a similar stance and want to believe that, despite how difficult they found the program, they met the challenges and it has changed them for the better. Furthermore, it may not be a coincidence that the clients who reflected on what they thought were the more productive qualities of the house arrest program were also the ones who had spent time in “The Center” and/or participated in various “12 Step” programs. Were they merely mimicking the therapeutic rhetoric of empowerment and transformation they had been conditioned to believe? Or were they just telling us what they thought we wanted to hear? Both are possible. Regardless, what seems important to us is that the discourse they have taken on, this narrative of truth they have come to employ to tell the story of their lives is a crucial link in understanding the ways we are governed by others and the ways we attempt to govern ourselves.

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# NEOLIBERAL PRISONS: REVISITING ‘DISCIPLINE & PUNISH’ IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

SARAH PEMBERTON

Foucault’s analysis of disciplinary power in *Discipline and Punish* has been influential in many academic fields, but some scholars question whether this analysis is relevant thirty years after its initial publication. Nancy Fraser (2003) argues that Foucault’s arguments are outdated and provides three reasons to suggest that Foucault’s analysis of disciplinary power is inapplicable to the twenty-first century. Firstly, Fraser argues that the national organization of social regulation has been displaced by globalization. Fraser then claims that privatization and welfare cuts have replaced the non-marketized social regulation that Foucault theorized. Finally, Fraser holds that the disciplinary self-regulation identified by Foucault has been replaced by increased and explicit repression. While both Foucault and Fraser discuss penalty as part of broader critical analyses of techniques of power, this paper explores their claims in the narrower and more specific light of penal policy in America and in England and Wales. By approaching penal policy and particularly imprisonment through Fraser and Foucault’s arguments, I hope to shed light on contemporary penalty and to identify themes that may have broader applicability, for instance the racialized and gendered nature of social power.

Criminal justice policy remains under national jurisdiction and is largely determined by domestic political and administrative pressures, in contrast to Fraser’s general claim about the end of national social regulation. Penal regimes vary widely between states, including substantial differences in the incarceration rates and prison conditions. Further, international agreements regarding the treatment of prisoners are often ineffective because they may be disregarded by national courts and officials; for example, the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners

are not applied in American prisons (King, 1999). There is more evidence of the international influence on prisons in England and Wales, since cases brought under the European Convention on Human Rights have led to alterations in prison procedures and conditions. Overall, Fraser's observation that national policymaking is of limited applicability to criminal justice policy.

Penal policy in the UK and U.S. during the past thirty years largely conforms to Fraser's observations about privatization and welfare cuts, particularly since privately-operated prisons have been introduced. The neoliberal ideology behind prison privatization has also contributed to changes in policing and sentencing because the belief in individual choice and rationality is central to deterrence approaches to crime. However, neoliberalism may alter rather than reduce the role of the state since the "retreat from the state" is also itself a positive technique of government" (Barry, Osborne and Rose, 1996: 11). Privatization may therefore evidence a new rationality for governing at a distance, rather than the end of disciplinary power that Fraser implies.

Fraser's third argument is that disciplinary self-regulation has been replaced by explicit repression, implying that criminal justice and punishment are a key part of the changes in power and governance:

In the U.S., accordingly, some observers posit the transformation of the social state into a 'prison industrial complex,' where incarceration of male minority youth becomes the favoured policy on unemployment. The prisons in question, moreover, have little in common with the humanist panopticons described by Foucault. Their management often subcontracted to for-profit corporations, they are less laboratories of self-reflection than hotbeds of racialized and sexualized violence...If such prisons epitomize one aspect of postfordism, it is one that no longer works through individual self-governance. Here, rather, we encounter the return of repression, if not the return of the repressed. (2003: 166)

Three empirical trends in prison regimes are discussed in this passage: prison privatization; the gendered and racialized nature of prison populations and of power within the prison; and the shift toward more punitive conditions. Fraser is correct about the existence of these trends, but I will suggest that her conceptual analysis of changing social power is over-simplistic and that the empirical trends in prison regimes are less dramatic than one would infer from her brief discussion of the topic. While Fraser claims that contemporary prisons exemplify the way in which repression has displaced disciplinary power within contemporary

societies, I suggest that prisons contribute to the production of racialized and gendered subjects and that this works partially through disciplinary self-governance. My analysis of contemporary prisons indicates that repression co-exists with discipline and biopower, suggesting the need to apply a conceptual framework of what Foucault describes as “a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government” (2000: 219).

### **Privatization and the “Prison Industrial Complex”**

Prison privatization is one of the starkest changes to British and American penal regimes in the past thirty years. Contractor-run prisons were introduced in the United States in the mid 1980s and in England during the late 1990s, since when the proportion of prisoners in private facilities has grown steadily. In 2006 there were 113,791 prisoners in privately-run federal or state prisons in the United States, which is 7% of the total prison population (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007a: 4). Privately operated prisons exist in the federal prison system and in thirty-two of the American states, while in New Mexico, Wyoming and Alaska over a third of prisoners are held in private facilities (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007a: 5). Privately-run prisons held 8,243 prisoners or 10% of the total prison population in England and Wales during 2006, which is the highest proportion of prisoners in private facilities of any state in Europe (Prison Reform Trust, 2006: 37). Concerns have been raised that profit maximization in privately-run prisons leads to unacceptably low expenditure on staff, healthcare and programs for prisoners, and that it results in sub-standard or unsafe conditions (Sinden, 2003). Privately operated prisons in both the UK and U.S. have lower staff-to-prisoner ratios than in public prisons, and the low staff wages cause high turnover, inexperience and difficulty in maintaining order (Sinden, 2003; Prison Reform Trust, 1996). Privately-run prisons in America also provide fewer educational programs than public prisons, which is a significant failing given the low educational achievement of prisoners and their limited opportunities for legal employment (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003: 4).

There is a deeper concern about the creation of a financial interest in criminal punishment, since the private prison industry benefits from increased incarceration and has a direct interest in promoting the continuation and expansion of imprisonment (Hallet, 2006). Those with direct interests in the growth of prisoner numbers include companies who market goods or services to prisons and those who use prisoner labor that is poorly paid and therefore highly profitable for employers. The

privatization and expansion of imprisonment may also benefit the predominantly rural communities who gain jobs in the new prisons, and all the investors in the private prison industry or associated companies. Angela Davis goes further, arguing that a focus on privately-run prisons may be misleading, since "public prisons have become so thoroughly saturated with the profit-producing products and services of private corporations that the distinction is not as meaningful as one might think" (2003: 100). These connections between the private prison industry, the broader economy and policymakers have prompted some to adopt the term "prison industrial complex."

While accounts of the prison industrial complex reflect the recent trend of prison privatization, explanations of imprisonment in terms of profit and the exploitation of prisoners date back to Rusche and Kirchheimer's (1967) analysis written in the 1930s. The history of such arguments indicates that neither the critiques nor the practices they condemn are novel developments. In addition, some scholars of prison privatization in Britain and America argue that politicians favored privatization because it allowed them to expand imprisonment more quickly and cheaply than by building and running public prisons (Hallett, 2006; Coyle, 2005). This analysis suggests that the growing prison population was more the cause than the effect of privatization, meaning that accounts of the prison industrial complex are liable to distort the power relations involved in contemporary penal policy. As an alternative, it is useful to consider Nikolas Rose's (1999) and Graham Burchell's (1996) studies of neoliberalism using the Foucauldian concept of governmentality, which directs one's attention toward the capillary operation of power instead of the realm of actions performed by the state.

The perspective of governmentality suggests that the introduction of the market and private corporations into the domain of the public sector does not signify a lessening in governance by the state. Instead, privatization indicates that the state is employing a new strategy of governing at greater remove, by introducing markets and market thinking into areas of state responsibility in order to promote an ideology of autonomy and choice (Rose, 1999). Similarly, Burchell (1996) argues that neoliberal governmentality involves the active creation of marketized behavior rather than a reversion to a natural state of market competition. This creation of marketized behavior is visible in prison privatization where free market arguments of efficiency via competition are ill suited because two or three companies dominate the market. Further, the "consumers," i.e. prisoners,

are not freely selecting a product, meaning that there is little incentive for good service and the potential for conflicts between the wellbeing of prisoners and the desire of prison contractors and the state to lower costs.

Neoliberalism has also involved a reconceptualization of the subject in terms of autonomy, choice and self-reliance, which has led deprivation to be seen as a personal responsibility rather than as a problem requiring state intervention. Neoliberal ideology thus views criminal behavior as an expression of rational self-interest, which is incompatible with the “quasi-therapeutic penal regime” (Rose, 1999: 133) from Foucault’s analyses in *Discipline and Punish*. This account of rational criminality has produced a punitive philosophy of deterrence whereby increasingly severe sentences are believed to alter the risk-benefit calculation of criminal behavior and to reduce crime rates (O’Malley, 1996: 198). The rise of neoliberalism is therefore directly related to changes in the forms and rationale of punishment as well as to prison privatization and reduced welfare provision. These welfare cuts have contributed to the feminization and racialization of poverty, thus indirectly shaping patterns of crime and criminal justice.

### **From Discipline to Punishment?**

During the past thirty years the criminal justice systems in the UK and U.S. have become more punitive due to a loss of faith in the rehabilitation of criminals. The new and more severe penal philosophy is expressed in phrases such as “three strikes and you’re out” and “no frills prisons” (Garland, 2001: 101). Policy changes have included longer prison sentences, the imposition of mandatory minimum terms for a given offence, more restrictive parole eligibility and the use of imprisonment for crimes that previously received lesser sanctions. The results of these changes have been large and ongoing increases in prisoner numbers, which have frequently caused over-crowding and thus deterioration in prison conditions. The American prison population grew by 600% between 1974 and 2004, which greatly exceeded population growth or rises in crime (Mauer, 2006: 20). The consequence of spiraling prisoner numbers is that the current American incarceration rate of 738 prisoners per 100,000 of the population is the highest incarceration rate in the world (Walmsley, 2007: 1). The punitive trend began later in England and Wales, where prisoner numbers rose 60% between 1992 and 2005, again far exceeding any rise in crime (Coyle, 2003: 11). Although the incarceration rate for England and Wales of 148 prisoners per 100,000 of



the population is much lower than the American figure, it is high by European standards and is far above the incarceration rates in France or Germany (Walmsley, 2007: 5). Prison regimes have also altered, including the spread of super-maximum security facilities in the United States, in which prisoners are held in solitary confinement for up to 23 hours every day.

Fraser's identification of violence and repression within prisons is echoed by Joy James, who argues that Foucault's account of subtle, non-violent disciplinary techniques obscures the presence of racialized violence in America. According to James, Foucault fails to differentiate between the bodies that are subject to power and therefore "universalizes the body of the white, propertied male" (James, 1996: 25) while failing to recognize sexual or racial biases. James (1996) concludes that the racialized violence perpetrated by the police and the continued use of repressive, bodily punishments such as the death penalty and chain gangs contradict Foucault's account of power and punishment. James and Fraser differ, however, because James believes that racialized violence has persisted since the nineteenth century while Fraser views the poor conditions and racial biases in American prisons as evidence of a change in forms of power. The implication of Fraser's argument is that the 1970s prisons analyzed by Foucault did not involve racialized violence, which is a view that is rejected by James and others including Davis (2003).

There is also evidence for Fraser's charge regarding the prevalence of rape in American prisons. In 2007 approximately 60,500 prisoners or 4.5% of the total experienced at least one incident of sexual victimization in their penal facility during the past year (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007b: 2), and much of this abuse was ongoing. While the official 2007 report does not differentiate between incidences of abuse among male and female prisoners, the fact that women's prisons comprised three of the ten facilities with the highest rates of sexual victimization suggests that women may be disproportionately affected (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007b: 2). Davis observes that rape and sexual assaults are major problems in women's prisons and goes on to argue that routine strip searches and body cavity searches constitute state-sanctioned sexual abuse targeted at female prisoners (Davis, 2003: 79).

This trend of penal severity diverges substantially from Foucault's account of the disciplinary prison as consisting in "both the deprivation of liberty and the technical transformation of individuals" (1995: 233). This

divergence is unsurprising given that Foucault's analysis is a genealogy, or a "history of the present" (1995: 31) written in 1970s France. Nonetheless, I believe there are elements of continuity between the nineteenth-century forms of power that Foucault identified and contemporary penal ideology and practice. The use of probation, parole, and educational programs for prisoners suggests that disciplinary normalization, or in different terms rehabilitation, remains "one aim among others" (Garland, 2001: 176) despite the punitive trend. Further, prisons continue to employ the defining disciplinary techniques of "hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and their combination" (Foucault, 1995: 170) because recent changes have reduced but not removed the power of prison officials and parole boards to determine when a prisoner is released. The continuation of disciplinary techniques of power in contemporary punishment indicates that penalty is more complex and more similar to Foucault's (1995) account than one might infer from Fraser's analysis.

### **Race, gender and punishment**

There are pronounced racial, ethnic and gender disparities between British and American societies and their prison populations. For a start, the vast majority of prisoners are men: in 2006 only 7% of American prisoners (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007: 3) and 6% of prisoners in England and Wales (UK Ministry of Justice, 2007: 89) were women. Of the American male prison population in 2006, 38% were Black, 21% were Latino/Hispanic, and 34% were White (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007: 7). Further, "nearly 8% of black men ages 30 to 34 were incarcerated as sentenced prisoners" in America during 2006 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007: 8) and ratios of incarceration rates show that Black men are 6.2 times more likely to be imprisoned than White men. The American female prison population shows similar trends since the women imprisoned in 2006 were 28% Black, 17% Latino/Hispanic, and 48% White (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007: 6). In England and Wales during 2006, 26% of male prisoners and 28% of female prisoners self-identified as being from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, although less than 10% of the general population are BME (UK Ministry of Justice, 2007: 87). By far the largest group of the BME prisoners was Black, constituting 15% of male prisoners and 20% of female prisoners, and Black men were 5.6 times more likely to be imprisoned than Whites (UK Ministry of Justice, 2007: 87).

Scholars such as Angela Davis (2003), Mark Mauer (2006), and Stuart

Hall et al. (1978) identify a tendency to associate race and particularly blackness with crime, which leads to selective law enforcement such as racial profiling by police. Racially targeted law enforcement contributes to the production of race both in structural inequality and as an experiential identity, as Hall et al. argue:

Race performs a double function. It is also the principle modality in which the black members of that class 'live,' experience, make sense of and thus come to a consciousness of their structured subordination...Race is therefore not only an element of the 'structures'; it is a key element in the class struggle—and thus in the cultures—of black labour. (1978: 347)

The inter-relation of race and class is also important because neoliberalism tends to reinforce racialization through greater socioeconomic inequality and welfare cuts, as well as through policing and incarceration. However, neoliberal techniques of government include the use of risk-based strategies for criminal justice that target populations instead of individuals (O'Malley, 1996). In societies where criminal activity and (to a much greater degree) law enforcement are shaped by race and class, risk is often understood in racially defined terms. By targeting populations perceived as likely to offend, law enforcement creates a feedback mechanism in which crime among the groups that are most closely watched is recorded, thus perpetuating their high-risk status and surveillance—a problem often noted regarding police searches for drugs. A vicious circle between race, poverty and imprisonment may develop because risk-based law enforcement creates racial profiling and disproportionate imprisonment, which in turn causes stigma and restricts one's ability to earn.

Racial and gendered disproportionalities among American prisoners have existed for decades, as is evidenced by the 1971 Attica prison revolt in which fifty-four people were killed (Davis, 2003: 57). Foucault visited Attica shortly after the revolt and remarked, "In the United States there must be one out of every thirty or forty black men in prison...The penal system...serves as an instrument for this practice of radical concentration" (1974: 157). While much of Foucault's work including *Discipline and Punish* does not mention race, his work provides valuable analytical tools with which to begin a theorization of power in relation to race and criminal justice, notably the concept of biopower. Biopower produces race through the use of statistical knowledge to create and govern distinct populations, enabling the control of life (Foucault, 2003: 258). Just as Foucault (1995) argues that prisons produce prisoners and their communities as deviant, I believe that contemporary prisons serve to

produce, not merely reflect or exaggerate, racialized identities. The huge scale and racial disproportionality of the American prison system make it central to the production of race, leading Loic Wacquant to describe the prison as “the pre-eminent institution for signifying and enforcing blackness, much as slavery was during the first three centuries of U.S. history” (2001: 119). Although Britain has far lower incarceration rates than America, carceral expansion and racial profiling in anti-terrorism policing seem to be increasing the significance of criminal justice institutions upon racialization.

Critical race theory suggests the need to understand racialized identities as being produced and not as natural or pre-existing, which is consistent with Foucault’s account of race in terms of biopower. This process of racialization may be reinforced by studies that highlight racial disproportionality in policing and in prison populations, since the association between race and criminality is solidified even as it is critiqued. Analyses that treat race only as a *cause* of differentiated treatment rather than also as an *effect* risk re-affirming the existence of race as a pre-existing, implicitly biological category and inadvertently justifying it as a criterion for law enforcement. While Fraser focuses on repression, a fuller analysis of the relationship between race and punishment requires one to acknowledge the use of biopower to constitute racialized identities.

The triangle of sovereignty-discipline-government also provides insight into the construction of sex and gender identities, particularly since prisons are one of the few sex-segregated institutions remaining in American and British societies. Segregation has negative effects for female prisoners including the relative scarcity of women’s prisons, which means that women are usually imprisoned much further from their homes than men, making family visits difficult. Women’s prisons tend to be under-resourced, tend to offer a smaller range of programs than men’s prisons, and often have different disciplinary norms since more rehabilitative regimes tend to be applied to women than to men (Howe, 1994). Analyses of women’s imprisonment have identified a greater use of psychiatric drugs and mental facilities for female prisoners due to norms whereby “deviant men have been constructed as criminal, while deviant women have been constructed as insane” (Davis, 2003: 66). The gender-specific nature of prison regimes is also evident in studies of male imprisonment in America, since prisons both reflect and reinforce a conception of black masculinity as physical, highly sexualized and violent (Hill Collins, 2004).

The enforcement of binary sex and gender identities in prisons causes severe problems for transsexual, transgendered and intersex people who are often placed in inappropriate facilities according to their birth sex or genitals rather than their self-identification (Sylvia Rivera Law Project, 2007; Peek, 2004). The lack of official figures regarding imprisoned trans and intersex people hinders analysis of this subject, but trans legal activists document high rates of abuse, violence and rape for trans prisoners, particularly in men's prisons where femininity places one at the bottom of the prison hierarchy (Sylvia Rivera Law Project, 2007; Peek, 2004). Prison facilities are ill-equipped to handle the health needs of trans and intersex people, making it difficult to obtain access to treatment such as hormones and potentially impacting their sex identity (Sylvia Rivera Law Project, 2007). Further, trans people may contravene the gendered rules for physical appearance and dress within prisons, and may be denied appropriate clothing or reported for disciplinary violations for wearing banned clothing or inappropriate hair styling (Sylvia Rivera Law Project, 2007: 31).

The treatment of imprisoned trans and intersex people makes it clear that the prison systems do not merely repress subjects whose identities are pre-determined. Instead, prisoners' sex and gender identities are constructed by minute disciplinary techniques, by biopower (hence the unavailability of information regarding transgressive sex or gender identities) and through the threat or actuality of violence. Further, the recent literature on intersectionality by scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins (2004) suggests that sex and gender are inter-connected to sexuality, class, race, and ethnicity. The intersectional nature of identity creates complex power dynamics that over-determine the imprisonment and mistreatment of some people, for instance poor trans people of color. While many prisoners experience prison as violent and repressive, discipline and biopower contribute to this violence by making the bearers of some identities more liable to attack or sexual assault than others. Fraser's conclusion that contemporary punishment evidences "the return of repression" (2003: 166) seems over-simplified in light of the insights generated by critical race theory, queer theory and Foucault's analysis of the constitution of the subject.

## Conclusion

Once one acknowledges that contemporary prisons constitute and reinscribe racialized and gendered identities then different questions emerge

regarding recent empirical trends. Instead of investigating the replacement of individual discipline by repression targeted at racial groups, one might analyze the consequences of the increased focus on managing populations through biopower. Further research into the triangle of sovereignty, discipline, and government might consider the ways in which practices of policing and punishment vary depending upon the populations considered and the implications of this for our broader understanding of power in contemporary societies. A more nuanced analysis of penalty is also likely to produce different strategies for resisting and destabilizing existing power relations than would emerge from Fraser's analysis of globalization, privatization and repression.

The final reason to be wary of conceptualizing contemporary prisons in terms of violence, exploitation or racism is that such condemnation is liable to encourage calls for "humane" prison regimes. Just as the 1970s social control theorists (including Foucault) contributed to the decline of rehabilitation and the introduction of penal severity, critiques of the violence and severity in contemporary prisons may prompt a reversion to the disciplinary prison. Concern about this circular logic of the prison prompts Foucault to state:

For a century and a half the prison had always been offered as its own remedy: the reactivation of the penitentiary techniques as the only means of overcoming their perpetual failure; the realization of the corrective project as the only means of overcoming the impossibility of implementing it. (1995: 268)

To avoid this trap of critiquing the prison system in order to renew or revitalize it, one should avoid over-simplifying prison regimes or calling implicitly or explicitly for more "humane," "regulated," or "effective" prisons. Instead, we must be attentive to the interrelation of power and knowledge, particularly the governance of racialized and gendered populations through combinations of discipline, sovereignty and biopower. While Fraser's discussion of contemporary forms of power poses a number of important questions, my analysis of contemporary penalty suggests that Foucault's concept of disciplinary power remains applicable and that his later work regarding biopower and governmentality generates valuable insights. In the realm of British and American criminal justice policy, I find Foucault's account of discipline far more relevant than one would likely infer from Fraser's analysis.

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**SECTION VII:**  
**RELIGION AND POLITICAL SPIRITUALITY**

WHEN LIFE WILL NO LONGER  
BARTER ITSELF:  
IN DEFENSE OF FOUCAULT  
ON THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

BEHROOZ GHAMARI-TABRIZI

The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future.

—Marx, *Das Kapital*

Modernity can and will no longer borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the models supplied by another epoch; *it has to create its normativity out of itself*...Who else but Europe could draw from its own traditions the insight, the energy, the courage of vision...to shape our mentality.

—Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*

If philosophy of the future exists, it must be born outside Europe or equally born in consequence of meetings and impacts between Europe and non-Europe.

—Foucault, *On Zen Buddhism*.

Perhaps the Shah's rebellious subjects are in the process of searching for the thing that we have forgotten for so long in Europe: *a political spirituality*.

—Foucault, *What Are the Iranians Dreaming About?*

When Michel Foucault's journalistic accounts of the Iranian Revolution appeared thirty years ago in Italian and French papers, friends and foes alike thought perhaps the author of *Madness and Civilization* had gone mad. The philosopher of the land of *laïceté* was enamored with the spirituality of a massive political action. His defense of the revolution—in spite, and, more importantly, *because* of its Islamic character—turned him into the butt of French ridicule. The intelligentsia interpreted Foucault's fascination with the Iranian Revolution as being kin to, at worst,

Heidegger's Nazi temptations, and, at best, Marx's Orientalist stab at India.

Public attention to Foucault's reflections on Islam and Iran was confined to the French circles during the years of revolution in Iran itself, 1978-1980. Although a number of essays engaged Foucault posthumously in the early 1990s,<sup>1</sup> the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 renewed interest in his musings on political Islam. One might reasonably ask what Foucault had to do with these acts of atrocity. But as I shall demonstrate, a host of Left and liberal philosophers, sociologists, historians, and essayists exploited the atrocities of 9/11 and other recent violent encounters of Muslims in Europe as the basis for launching a feverish attack on the proponents of what they dubbed "cultural relativism." They warned that nihilism and the awakening of the antiquated regimes of power were the inevitable consequence of the erasure of the Enlightenment as the Universal Referent. But it was not until Janet Afary and Kevin Anderson published *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*,<sup>2</sup> that Foucault was tried and convicted as the chief perpetrator of malefic cultural relativism. Afary and Anderson raise fundamental questions about Foucault's critique of modern disciplinary power in order to prove the consistency between his philosophical oeuvre and his revolutionary sympathies for what they call pseudo-fascist Islamism.<sup>3</sup>

It is easy to dismiss Foucault's writings about Iran as another botched Orientalist venture, and disparage him as a disgruntled romantic European philosopher.<sup>4</sup> But the centerpiece of Afary and Anderson's argument is an attempt to demonstrate the failure of post-structuralist philosophy to

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Georg Stauth, "Revolution in Spiritless Times: An Essay on Michel Foucault's Enquiries into the Iranian Revolution," *International Sociology*, vol. 6 (September 1991): 259-280; Craig Keating, "Reflections on the Revolution in Iran: Foucault on Resistance," *Journal of European Studies*, vol. 27 (1997): 181-197; and Michiel Leezenberg, "Power and Political Spirituality: Michel Foucault on the Islamic Revolution in Iran," *Arcadia* Band 33, Heft 1 (1998): 72-89.

<sup>2</sup> Janet Afary and Kevin Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Afary and Anderson approvingly borrowed Maxim Rodinson's characterization of Islamism as a "type of archaic fascism" (See chapter 3).

<sup>4</sup> For discussion on Foucault's Orientalism see Ian Almond, *The New Orientalists: Postmodern Representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard*, London, New York: I.B.Tauris, 2007.

reckon with the catastrophic consequences of deviating from the project of the Enlightenment. Affected by the civilizational ardor of the post-9/11 moment, Afary and Anderson hold post-structuralist/post-humanist social theorists (including such unlikely allies as Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn<sup>5</sup>) responsible for affording discursive legitimacy to what they perceived to be a pre-modern Islamist project to obliterate modernity. “Did not a post-structuralist, leftist discourse,” they ask, “which spent all of its energy opposing the secular liberal or authoritarian modern state and its institutions, leave the door wide open to an uncritical stance toward Islamism and other socially retrogressive movements?”<sup>6</sup>

Afary and Anderson trace the roots of the horrific terrorist acts of September 11, 2001 to the upsurge in radical Islamist political movements following the successful Iranian Revolution.<sup>7</sup> The possibility of *total civilizational annihilation* was the price for being seduced by what Foucault called “political spirituality.” In effect, they situate their own critique of Foucault’s journalistic reflections on the Iranian Revolution as a critical engagement with root causes of September 11.

What distinguishes Afary and Anderson’s trial of Foucault from earlier critiques is that they regard his zeal for the Islamic Revolution as the manifestation of, rather than an aberration from, his philosophical skepticism and his historical genealogy. While I agree conditionally with their assessment, in this article I intend to clear this assertion of its pejorative association. I shall argue that Foucault’s sympathies had nothing to do with what Afary and Anderson regard as a naïve romanticization of “pre-modern” values and culture. Instead, I shall argue that his enthusiasm lay in witnessing a moment of *making* history outside the purview of western teleological schemes. The second point Afary and Anderson raise is that Foucault’s experience of the Iranian Revolution informed and shaped his later writings—particularly the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*—as well as his renewed interest in the question of ethics. They erroneously offer his essay *What Is Enlightenment* as evidence that Iran’s post-revolutionary reign of terror forced him to

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<sup>5</sup> See Afary and Anderson’s “Epilogue,” particularly the section “Western Leftists and Feminist Responses to September 11,” pp. 168-72.

<sup>6</sup> Afary and Anderson, p. 136.

<sup>7</sup> They chastised Chomsky and Zinn and other Western leftists for ignoring “the specific social and political context in which Al-Qaeda arose, that of two decades of various forms of radical Islamist politics, beginning with the Iranian Revolution.” *Ibid.*, p. 169.

recant his critique of immutable Universal Referents and “alter his stance toward both the Enlightenment and humanism.”<sup>8</sup> In order to justify their case, they misconstrue Foucault’s early works and look for the footprint of the Iranian Revolution in the wrong places in his later writing.

This essay is divided into four parts. In the first three parts, I introduce Foucault’s depiction of the Iranian Revolution and show how his critique of modernity shaped his conception of political spirituality. Then, I disprove Afary and Anderson’s claim that Ayatollah Khomeini’s *Grande Terreur* repelled Foucault back into the shelter of Kantian Enlightenment norms in his later years. I think they have got it exactly wrong. I will argue that his reinterpretation of historical-transindividual subjectivity, the hermeneutics of the subject, and the question of ethics in his last lectures at the *Collège de France* were *consistent* with his depiction of the Iranian Revolution. Without speaking about it, even in these last public remarks Foucault reaffirmed his sympathy with the revolutionary movement without endorsing its consequences.

It is well known that Foucault was deeply engaged with the prisoners’ rights movement, primarily through his work with the *Groupe d’Information sur les Prisons*. In 1977, two French lawyers involved in Iranian exilic politics brought the issue of Iranian political prisoners to his attention. Fascinated by the idea of being a philosopher-journalist, Foucault had already begun negotiating an arrangement to write a regular feature, “Michel Foucault Investigates,” with the Italian daily, *Corriere della Sera*. He had originally planned to write a series on President Jimmy Carter’s America. However in 1978, revolutionary events in Iran presented far more appealing subject matter. He made his first visit to Iran in 1978 in late summer and returned a few weeks later in early fall.

Foucault arrived in Tehran just days after a week of massive demonstrations. The first and second demonstrations were peaceful. According to some estimates, more than one million people participated in the first, and there were greater numbers in the second. The third demonstration, known now as “Black Friday,” was bloody. More than 250 people were massacred, mostly by heavy machine gunfire directed from overhead military helicopters. The French philosopher divulged his unexpected awe in an interview published after the collapse of the Pahlavi monarchy in 1979:

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

Among the things that characterize this revolutionary event there is the fact that it has brought out—and few people in history have had this—an absolutely collective will. The collective will is a political myth with which jurists and philosophers try to analyze or to justify institutions, etc. It's a theoretical tool: nobody has ever seen the 'collective will' and, personally, I thought that the collective will was like God, like the soul, something one would never encounter. I don't know whether you agree with me, but we met in Tehran and throughout Iran, the collective will of a people.<sup>9</sup>

He also recalled:

When I arrived in Iran, immediately after the September massacres, I said to myself that I was going to find a terrorized city, because there had been four-thousand dead.<sup>10</sup> Now I can't say that I found happy people, but there was an absence of fear and an intensity of courage, or rather, the intensity that people were capable of when danger, though still not removed, had already been transcended.<sup>11</sup>

What distinguished Foucault's response to the Iranian Revolution may be summarized in the following four points: teleological history, political spirituality, "is it useless to revolt?" and *Was ist Aufklärung?*

## 1. Teleological History

Foucault rejected all forms of Marxian or otherwise developmentalist discourses, all of which attributed the emergence of the revolutionary movement in Iran to the contradictions emanating from the Shah's modernization project. Rather than the conventional tension between a particular past-orientation and a prescriptive future-projection, he defined history as a way of reinventing the present moment; this was the

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<sup>9</sup> Michel Foucault, "Iran: The Spirit of a World without Spirit," in Afary and Anderson, p. 253. For the sake of consistency, in this chapter, I have used Afary and Anderson's translations in the appendix of their book.

<sup>10</sup> This was an inflated number that circulated after Black Friday. An official and true estimate put the dead at 88 and wounded 205. These numbers were affirmed after the revolution by the Martyrs Foundations. Wildly overstated numbers circulated effectively during the Shah's reign in order to exaggerate the extent of the brutality of the regime. For a report on the actual numbers of the casualties of the political oppression of the Shah's regime see Emad Baqi, *Barresi-ye Enqelab-e Iran (An Analyses of the Iranian Revolution)*, Second Edition, Tehran: Sarabi, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Spirit of a World..." p. 257.

preeminent strength of the revolution he witnessed. What appealed to him was the ambiguity within which it operated—not ambiguity in its rejection of the Shah, but in its visionary future in the absence of any affirmative and precise political agenda. Alongside the overtly religious character of the revolution, this very ambiguity generated a bewildering anxiety among western intellectuals, particularly in France with its long tradition of *laïcité*. For example, in 1979 Claire Brière challenged Foucault precisely on this point:

The reaction I've heard most often about Iran is that people don't understand. When a movement is called revolutionary, people in the West, including ourselves, always have the notion of progress, of something that is about to be transformed in the direction of progress. All this is put into question by the religious phenomenon...Now, I don't know whether you managed, when you were in Iran, to determine, to grasp the nature of that enormous religious confrontation—I myself found it very difficult. The Iranians themselves are swimming in that ambiguity and have several levels of language, commitment, expression, etc.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast to the common notion of *revolution as teleology*, Foucault described political rebellion as a historical fact through which “subjectivity (not that of great men, but that of anyone) introduces itself into history and gives it its life.”<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, Foucault believed the Iranian masses, “swimming in ambiguity,” were actually realizing an instance of his theory of “constitutive ambivalence,” in Edward Said's words, “towards history.”<sup>14</sup>

Writing the “history of the present” from a genealogical perspective inevitably generates moral anxieties about what counts as good and evil acts. One needs to grasp Foucault's writings on the Iranian Revolution *within* the context of his general opposition to any teleological ontology—that is, to regarding the present with either past orientation or future projection. Thus, what is striking is Foucault's construal of the Iranian Revolution *as it was happening* as a moment in which the masses refused to regard their acts as being comprehensibly ordered:

We must not imagine that the world turns toward us a legible face which we would have only to decipher; the world is not the accomplice of our

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<sup>12</sup> “Iran: The Spirit...” p. 251.

<sup>13</sup> “Is it Useless to Revolt?” p. 266.

<sup>14</sup> Edward Said, *Beginnings: Invention and Method*, New York: Basic Books, 1975. p. 290.



knowledge; there is no prediscursive providence which predisposes the world in our favor. We must conceive discourse as a violence which we do to things, or, in any case as a practice which we impose on them.<sup>15</sup>

As Micheil Leezenberg observed, Foucault turned his reports on the Iranian Revolution into a philosophical commentary on modernity. Philosophical journalism was a way of grasping “what is *in the process of happening*.” For Foucault this meant reporting about ideas which were *not* contained in the boundaries of the Enlightenment progressive schema precisely because they were unfolding in the present moment. By tying significant “ideas” to a collective revolutionary movement, Foucault decisively opposed both the postmodern rejection of grand ideas as well as the Marxian dogmas of economic primacy.<sup>16</sup> He wrote:

Some say that the great ideologies are in the course of dying. The contemporary world, however, is burgeoning with ideas...One has to be present at the birth of ideas and at the explosion of their force; not in the books that pronounce them, but in the vent in which they manifest their force, and in the struggles people wage for or against ideas.<sup>17</sup>

In a more sociological report, originally called “The Shah and the Dead Weight of Modernity,” changed by the newspaper editors to “The Shah is a Hundred Years Behind Times,” Foucault cast the revolution not as a *failed* project of modernity, but rather as the evidence of the possibility of transcending the spiritless world modernity has instituted. He had been incessantly instructed that the right way to understand events in Iran was as a “crisis of modernization”: “a traditional society cannot and does not want to follow [an] arrogant monarch [attempting to] compete with the industrialized nations.”<sup>18</sup> He argued that the Shah was hopelessly trying to preserve a Kemalist modernization project envisioned in the 1920s by his father to modernize the country “in a European fashion.” Foucault ridiculed the liberal nationalists’ ideas that Iran needed a *modified* modernization under a constitutional regime with the motto, “Let the king reign, but not govern.” For him, rather than the religious mode of the revolution, “*modernization* itself was an archaism.”<sup>19</sup> The possibility of transcending modernization itself was a curious and important paradoxical

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<sup>15</sup> Michel Foucault, “The Order of Discourse,” in *Untying the Text*, edited by Robert Young. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981, p. 67.

<sup>16</sup> Michiel Leezenberg, “Power and Political Spirituality.”

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Leezenberg, p. 76.

<sup>18</sup> “The Shah is a Hundred Years Behind the Times,” p. 194.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 194-96

effect of the Iranian mass movement, whose “revolt spread without splits or internal conflicts.”<sup>20</sup>

In his philosophical coverage of the revolutionary events of late summer and fall of 1978, Foucault recognized the competing interests of various political parties and tendencies. The release of the mostly Marxist political prisoners, the re-opening of the universities, and most importantly, the successful strikes of the oil industry workers in the south; each could have introduced irreconcilable frictions into the revolutionary movement. But they did not. The political calculations of competing factions did not find expression in what Foucault called “the revolutionary experience itself.” At a certain moment, he observed, “without precipitating social or political causes, the whole of the Iranian people were united in their opposition to the Shah.”

He wondered about the nature of such a rare and “indefinable force” that had united the Iranian body politic. “What we witnessed,” he declared, “was not the result of an alliance between various political groups. Nor was it the result of a compromise between social classes that, in the end, each giving into the other on this or that...Something quite different has happened. A phenomenon has traversed the entire people and will one day stop...There was literally a light that lit up in all of them and which bathed them all at the same time.”<sup>21</sup> Later, Foucault conceptualized this phenomenon as *political spirituality*, a force that asserts itself in a continuous enchantment of history. *Political spirituality* appears here as an alternative to historical determinism.

For the people who inhabit this land, what is the point of searching, even at the cost of their own lives, for this thing whose possibility we have forgotten since the Renaissance and the great crisis of Christianity, a *political spirituality*. I can already hear the French laughing, but I know that they are wrong.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “A Revolt with Bare Hands,” p. 211. Foucault identified three paradoxes in the revolutionary movement: first, the ineffectiveness of one of the mightiest militaries in the world against peaceful demonstrators; second, the absence of internal conflicts; and third, the lack of future plans.

<sup>21</sup> “Iran: The Spirit...” p. 256.

<sup>22</sup> “What Are the Iranians Dreaming [*Révent*] About?” p. 209.

## 2. Political Spirituality

It is important to remind ourselves that while Foucault, the philosophical journalist, unquestionably identified Shi'ite Islam as the source of the Iranian masses' political spirituality, this was not the first time he grappled with the concept of spirituality itself.<sup>23</sup> His treatment of spirituality was consistent with his notions of the social productions of, and resistance to, subjectivity. He conceived it as a desire to liberate the *body* from the prison house of the *soul*. In this typically Foucauldian conceptual inversion, he highlighted the ways in which the body seceded from the normative docility of the technologies of the self.<sup>24</sup> "By spirituality," he wrote, "I understand...that which precisely refers to a subject acceding to a certain mode of being and to the transformations which the subject must make of himself in order to accede to this mode of being."<sup>25</sup>

Foucault also gave spirituality a corporeal meaning, which he directly linked to the care of the self. In later writings about the self (which Afary and Anderson mistakenly interpret as recantation of a chastened Foucault) he remains skeptical of the liberal rational subject articulated in a governable moral order. Foucault views the care of the self as an ethical imperative where he conceives ethics as "the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself...how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject *of his own actions*."<sup>26</sup>

While one might detect traces of Bataille's mystical conception of inner experience in Foucault's writing, this would be a mistake. The act of transcendence that Foucault evokes in his notion of political spirituality is not a personal transgression of cultural mores through an *expérience limite*. Not only would such a reading minimize and distort the specifically *religious* context of Foucault's discourse; more importantly, it would

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<sup>23</sup> Jeremy R. Carrette, "Prologue to a Confession of the Flesh," in *Religion and Culture: Michel Foucault*, edited by Jeremy R. Carrette. New York: Routledge, 1999.

<sup>24</sup> See Foucault [1978], "Question of Method," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Carrette, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984, p. 352 (italics added).

depoliticize his spirituality and ethics.<sup>27</sup> One cannot sever Foucault's notion of the ethical care of the self, including the spiritual exercise such care engenders, from his conception of politics, most particularly with what he calls "the governmentalization of the state."<sup>28</sup> In *The Hermeneutics of the Self*, he reflects:

Governmenting people...is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by oneself...Among the techniques of the self in this field of self-technology, I think that the techniques oriented towards the discovery and the formulation of the truth concerning oneself are extremely important.<sup>29</sup>

Foucault fuses together the often separate institutions of the state (as the instrument of coercion), religion (as an institution of legitimation) and the individual (as the protagonist of self-governing technologies), thereby "collapsing...the boundaries between politics, religion and the ethics of self."<sup>30</sup> It is in this context that one must understand his enthusiasm for the productive ambiguity of mass revolutionary action in Iran in 1978-1979.

How can one analyze the connection between ways of distinguishing true and false and ways of governing oneself and others? The search for a new foundation for each of these practices, in itself and relative to the other, the will to discover a different way of governing oneself through a different way of dividing up true and false—this is what I would call "political *spiritualité*."<sup>31</sup>

Notice that religion, in Foucault's philosophical journalism, is not incidental to the movement. Rather, he roots the revolution directly in the masses common sense of "true and false" in the formation of which religion plays a constitutive role. "So what is the role of religion?" he reflected. "Not that of an ideology, which would help to mask

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<sup>27</sup> James Bernauer, *Michel Foucault's Force of Flight: Toward an Ethics for Thought*, Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1991.

<sup>28</sup> Foucault explains that "the pastoral, the new diplomatic-military techniques and, lastly, police: these are the three elements that I believe made possible the production of this fundamental phenomenon in Western history, the governmentalization of the state." "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect*, p. 104.

<sup>29</sup> Foucault, "The Hermeneutics of the Self," in Carrette, p. 162-63.

<sup>30</sup> Carrette, p. 42.

<sup>31</sup> Foucault, "Questions of Method," p. 82.

contradictions or form a sort of sacred union between divergent interests.” Religion afforded the revolution a vocabulary by means of whose idiomatic “ceremonial,” and “timeless drama” a nation could redefine its existence.<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps what is most striking in his construal of the Iranian Revolution is his indifference to the alleged conjuncture between religious dogma and the emerging post-revolutionary state. On more than one occasion, he declared that “the mullahs are not at all ‘revolutionary,’ even in its populist sense of the term.” The religion that animated his writings on the Iranian Revolution was not *spoken* by the mullahs or articulated by any other exponent of the divine text. It constituted a force that perpetuated the *hermeneutics of the subject* on the streets of the revolutionary Iran.

[Religion] transforms thousands of forms of discontent, hatred, misery, and despair into a *force*. It transforms them into a force because it is a form of expression, a mode of social relations, a supple and widely accepted elemental organization, a way of being together, a way of speaking and listening, something that allows one to be listened to by others.<sup>33</sup>

Foucault believed that Shi‘ism was especially conducive to the kind of hermeneutics that was essential in the total transformation of the self. His knowledge of Shi‘ite Islam, at least in its classical context, was shaped by the French scholarship advanced by Louis Massignon and Henry Corbin, both of whom emphasized Shi‘ism’s quest for justice and mystical spirituality. Foucault’s views were also shaped by the French-educated Iranian liberation theologian, Ali Shari‘ati. As the following passage shows, he recentered the debate on the historic meaning of the revolutionary movement, away from Marxist economic determinism as well as Orientalist *textual* readings of Islam.

[W]hatever the economic difficulties, we still have to explain why there were people who rose up and said: We’re not having any more of this, in rising up the Iranians said to themselves—and this perhaps is the soul of the uprising: “Of course, we have to change this regime and get rid of this man, we have to change this corrupt administration, we have to change the whole country, the political organization, the economic system, the foreign policy. But, above all, *we have to change ourselves*. Our way of being, our relationship with others, with things, with eternity, with God, etc., must be

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<sup>32</sup> Foucault, “The Spirit...”, p. 252.

<sup>33</sup> Foucault, *Ibid.*, p. 202.

completely changed, and there will only be a true revolution if this radical change in our experience takes place.” I believe that it is here that Islam played a role. It may be that one or other of its obligations, one or other of its codes exerted a certain fascination. But, above all, in relation to the way of life that was theirs, religion for them was like a promise and guarantee of finding something that would radically change their subjectivity. Shi‘ism is precisely a form of Islam that, with its teaching and esoteric content, distinguishes between what is mere external obedience to the code and what is the profound spiritual life; when I say that they were looking to Islam for a change in their subjectivity, this is quite compatible with the fact that traditional Islamic practice was already there and already gave them their identity; in this way they had of living the Islamic religion as a revolutionary force there was something other than the desire to obey the law more faithfully, there was the desire to renew their existence by going back to a spiritual experience that they thought they could find with Shi‘ite Islam.<sup>34</sup>

In Iran, Foucault recognized the possibility in Islam of a continuous and active creation of a political order perpetuated by an individual experience of piety and the care of the self. The intriguing part of his view of Shi‘ism is that he does not interpret Islamic Law (capital “L”) as the source of justice. Rather, in another characteristic inversion, he proposes that “it is justice that made law and not law that manufactured justice.” He further shows some familiarity with an old debate about the question of justice in different juridical Islamic schools. “One must find this justice in ‘the’ text dictated by God to the Prophet. However, one can also decipher it in the life, the sayings, the wisdom, and the exemplary sacrifices of the imams, born, after Ali, in the house of the Prophet, and persecuted by the corrupt government of the caliphs, these arrogant aristocrats who had forgotten the old egalitarian system of justice.”<sup>35</sup> In contrast to a common Orientalist theme, which is strictly committed to the hermeneutics of Text and Law, Foucault highlights the experience of and desire for justice in the hermeneutics of the subject.<sup>36</sup> He conceives Shi‘ism as a religion that has given people inexhaustible resources for resisting the power of the state. Accordingly, he pondered whether an “Islamic government” should be seen as a “reconciliation,” a “contradiction,” or as the threshold of a “novelty.”

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<sup>34</sup> Foucault, “The Spirit...”, p. 255, my italics.

<sup>35</sup> Foucault, “Tehran: Faith against the Shah,” in Afary and Anderson, p. 201.

<sup>36</sup> For an elaboration on this point, see Armando Salvatore, *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity*, Berkshire, UK: Ithaca Press, 1997. pp. 152-154.

Foucault puts forward a conception of religion that is perpetuated in the practice of the care of the self and spirituality. Therefore, he saw no *inherent* continuity between the notion of an Islamic Government and theocracy. He understood the former to be “a utopia,” the terms and exact meaning of which was to be negotiated in the future. As I have shown elsewhere,<sup>37</sup> the entire revolutionary movement, including its clerical leadership, shared this view that “Islamic government” had to be understood as “an ideal,” the realization of which depended on the conscious willingness of its subjects.<sup>38</sup> While the notion of the Islamic government was inspired by the principles of governance during the time of the Prophet, it also pointed toward a “luminous and distant point where it would be possible to renew fidelity rather than maintain obedience.” A number of religious authorities had told Foucault that “it would require long work by civil and religious experts, scholars, and believers in order to shed light on all the problems of which the Quran never claimed to give a precise response.” Foucault also rightly insisted that “in pursuit of this ideal, the distrust of legalism seemed to me to be essential, along with a faith in the creativity of Islam.”<sup>39</sup>

I do not feel comfortable speaking of Islamic government as an “idea” or even as an “ideal.” Rather, it impressed me as a form of “political will.” It impressed me in its effort to politicize structures that are inseparably social and religious in response to current problems. It also impressed me in its attempt to open a spiritual dimension in politics.<sup>40</sup>

In the Iranian Revolution, Foucault observed, in another inversion, a “displacement (and a rescue at the same time) of the tradition of modernity.”<sup>41</sup> He predicted that his enthusiasm would scandalize the French, whose commitment to *laïceté* was deeply integrated into their intellectual expression. Even his friends ridiculed him. One of them, Claude Mauriac, the editor of *Gallimard*, recalled a private conversation

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<sup>37</sup> Behrooz Ghamari, *Islam and Dissent in Postrevolutionary Iran: Abdolkarim Soroush, Religious Politics and Democratic Reform*, London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008.

<sup>38</sup> Obviously, this is not what transpired after the revolution. But this has always been a point of contention among the advocates of political Islam that whether a virtuous community of Muslims must give rise to an Islamic state (bottom up) or an Islamic state must create a virtuous community of Muslims (top-down). See Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Ibid.*, chapter 2.

<sup>39</sup> Foucault, “What Are the Iranians Dreaming About?” pp. 205-207.

<sup>40</sup> Foucault, *Ibid.* pp. 208-209.

<sup>41</sup> Salvatore, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

on November 23, 1978, in which he had expressed reservations to Foucault about his support of a *political spirituality*. Mauriac recounted their conversation in his memoirs:

Mauriac: I read your paper in *Nouvel Observateur*, but not without surprise, I must say.

Foucault: And you laughed? You are among those that I could already hear laughing.

Mauriac: No...I only said to myself that as to spirituality and politics, we have seen what that gave us.

Foucault: And politics *without* spirituality, my dear Claude?<sup>42</sup>

### 3. Is it Useless to Revolt?

Not only did Foucault try to make sense of revolutionary spirituality, but also he applauded the Iranians for having revived the spirit of revolution, a feat that many French people believed, in a post-May 1968 world, would never appear again in history. By locating the spirit of the revolution in Iran, Foucault rejected another central element of Orientalism, that of the unchanging essence of Muslim societies. Most pointedly, he coupled his celebration of Iran's revolutionary dynamism with the "present stagnation of Western subjectivity, incapable of renewing its political spirituality."

In the events in Iran in 1978 and 1979, Foucault saw a useful challenge for, or even negation of, his theory of power and governmentality. The Iranian masses demonstrated the possibility of resistance without participating in or perpetuating a *preconceived* schema of power. *This is the single important point that distinguishes Foucault's reflections on the Iranian Revolution from his earlier writing.* The revolutionary masses expressed themselves most forcefully in the negation, "The Shah Must Go!" Here was the paradox: in "the absence of long-term objectives... because there is no plan for government and because the slogans are simple, there can be a clear, obstinate, almost unanimous popular will."<sup>43</sup>

Did witnessing the revolution in Iran alter Foucault's understanding of mass resistance to power? Did his philosophical journalism deviate from understanding resistance to power as an act that ultimately extended "our

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<sup>42</sup> Cited in Afary and Anderson, p. 91.

<sup>43</sup> Foucault, "A Revolt with Bare Hands," p. 212.



participation in the present system”?<sup>44</sup> Many early critics of Foucault, particularly feminists, had rebuked his conception of power for its lack of recognition of and real possibility for resistance. For example, Nancy Fraser once pointed out that Foucault “adopts a concept of power that permits him no condemnation of any objectionable features of modern societies.”<sup>45</sup> While it is debatable whether he really followed the Derridian mode of negating any and all possibility of resistance,<sup>46</sup> his all-encompassing and generative notion of power troubled both the adherents as well as the detractors of his theory. Thus, despite his sympathies toward the Foucauldian ethics, William Connolly chastised Foucault for not recognizing that “we *can* criticize the present from the perspective of alternative ideals” without feeling that our action merely reproduces a variation of the present order.<sup>47</sup>

One of his most vociferous critics, Jürgen Habermas, also castigated Foucault for his nihilistic apathy toward emancipatory politics. By linking his skepticism to the aporia in the works of Horkheimer and Adorno, Habermas claimed that, at bottom, Foucault did not offer a truly critical stance in his analysis of power. If resistance simply reproduces existing relations of power, Habermas argued, then “there wouldn’t be any resistance. Because resistance has to be like power: just as inventive, just as mobile, just as productive as it is.”<sup>48</sup> Foucault’s comments, such as “it seems to me that power *is* ‘always already there,’ that one is never ‘outside’ it, that there are no ‘margins’ for those who break with it to gambol in,”<sup>49</sup> seemed to prove the characterization of the philosopher as “a

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<sup>44</sup> Foucault, “Revolutionary Action: ‘Until Now’,” in Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, edited by Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980, p. 230.

<sup>45</sup> Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 33.

<sup>46</sup> Derrida famously argued in an interview that “Indeed, I cannot conceive of a radical critique which would not be ultimately motivated by some sort of affirmation, acknowledged or not.” (Richard Kearny, “Dialogue with Jacques Derrida,” in *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers*, edited by Richard Kearny. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984, p. 118)

<sup>47</sup> William Connolly, *Politics and Ambiguity*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987, p. 107 (italics added).

<sup>48</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990, p. 283

<sup>49</sup> Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, New York: Pantheon, 1980, p. 142.

stoic, a dispassionate observer of the present social order, rather than its concerned critic.”<sup>50</sup>

Rather than categorically condemning *all* forms of resistance, Foucault did try to explain the nuances of his conception of power and governmentality. Although he developed a more cohesive theory of “counter-power” and resistance in his later work on ethics and the care of the self, throughout his career, he did not trivialize resistance as simply another means of participating in disciplinary power. In *Power/Knowledge*, for example, he spoke of the possibility of integrating various forms of resistance into “global strategies,”<sup>51</sup> and identified the “essential political problem for intellectuals” to be the discovery of “the possibility of constituting a new regime of truth.”<sup>52</sup> But it is in his post-Iranian Revolution writings that he most closely contemplates the significance of *political revolt as an ethical concern*, despite the possibility of giving rise to another institution of disciplinary power.

An important example of Foucault’s response to critics who pinpointed political apathy in his work can be seen in his 1983 interview “On the Genealogy of Ethics.” In response to a question about contemporary problems of ethics and whether the Greeks “offer an attractive and plausible alternative,” he responded:

No! I am not looking for an alternative; *you can’t find the solution of a problem in the solution of another problem raised at another moment by other people*. You see, what I want to do is not the history of solutions, and that’s the reason why I don’t accept the word “alternative.” I would like to do genealogy of problems, of *problématique*. My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. *So my position leads not to apathy but to hyper-and pessimistic activism.*<sup>53</sup>

The paradoxical notion of “pessimistic activism” gives us the very kernel of Foucault’s understanding of the Iranian Revolution. In his last

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<sup>50</sup> Richard Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 173.

<sup>51</sup> Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 142.

<sup>52</sup> Foucault, *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>53</sup> Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics,” in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, edited by Dreyfus and Rabinow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, pp. 231-32 (italics added).

journalistic entry on the Iranian Revolution, “Is It Useless to Revolt?” published in May 1979 on the first page of *Le Monde*, he responded to critics who rebuked him for supporting a revolution whose objective was an Islamic state. In perhaps the most moving passage in his philosophical *reportage*, he defended his support of a revolution without endorsing its outcome:

Uprisings belong to history, but in a certain way, they escape it. The movement through which a lone man, a group, a minority, or an entire people say, “I will no longer obey,” and are willing to risk their lives in the face of a power that they believe to be unjust, seems to me to be irreducible. This is because no power is capable of making it absolutely impossible. Warsaw will always have its ghetto in revolt and its sewers populated with insurgents. The man in revolt is ultimately inexplicable. There must be an uprooting that interrupts the unfolding of history, and its long series of reasons why, for a man “really” to prefer the risk of death over the certainty of having to obey...If societies persist and survive, that is to say if power in these societies is not “absolutely absolute,”<sup>54</sup> it is because behind all the consent and the coercion, beyond the threats, the violence, and the persuasion, there is the possibility of this moment where life cannot be exchanged, where power becomes powerless, and where, in front of the gallows and the machine guns, men rise up.<sup>55</sup>

For Foucault the undesirability of the postrevolutionary regime could not explain the significance of the revolutionary movement in shaping the rebellious subjectivity of Iranians. One must find the manifestation of “pessimistic activism” in the *inexplicable* revolting person and the *irreducible* subject that he becomes. With the mounting evidence of atrocities of the new regime in Tehran, his critics pressured Foucault to

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<sup>54</sup> Foucault is borrowing the concept of “absolutely absolute” from Amir Parviz Pouyan, one of the leaders of a communist urban guerilla group called the *Fada’iyan-e Khalq* (The Devotes of People), established in 1970. Pouyan advanced a theory that came to be known as the thesis of “two absolutes,” that is “the *absolute* domination of the regime, which finds its reflection in the minds of the workers as their *absolute* inability to change the established order.” In his manifesto on the necessity of armed struggle entitled *On the Refutation of the Theory of Survival*, written in 1969, he identified two principle causes that prevented the working class from rising against their oppression. “[Workers] presume,” he wrote, “the power of their enemy to be absolute and their own inability to emancipate themselves [to be] absolute.” And then he asked, “How can one think of emancipation while confronting absolute power with absolute weakness?” (p. 4).

<sup>55</sup> Foucault, “Is It Useless to Revolt?” pp. 63-64.

repudiate himself from his early enthusiasm about the revolution. He saw no shame in changing his mind, but insisted that “there is no reason to say that one’s opinion has changed when one is against hands being chopped off today, after having been against the tortures of the SAVAK yesterday.”<sup>56</sup> In line with his genealogical method and his non-teleological historiography, Foucault considered his own ethics to be “antistrategic.” That is to say that he distinguished between the deferred consequence of an uprising and its meaning for its perpetrators. Whereas the “strategist” locates his ethical principles in what this outcry means “in relation to the needs of the whole,” Foucault’s “antistrategy” highlights the act of uprising without discrimination in its meaning either *in itself* or *for itself*. The colonization of the uprising by *realpolitik*, Foucault argued, does not justify its condemnation. Foucault was not concerned about the “deep reasons” of the movement, but in the “manner in which it was lived.”

#### 4. Was ist Aufklärung?

In 1983, Foucault refracted the Enlightenment through the lens of the Iranian Revolution in the short essay, “What is Enlightenment?” Afary and Anderson interpret the essay as an indirect apology for mistaken enthusiasm. They base their reading on a section in the essay where he suggests that “the historical ontology of ourselves must turn away from all projects that claim to be global or radical. In fact *we know from experience* that the claim to escape from the system of contemporary reality so as to produce the overall programs of another society, or another way of thinking, *another culture*, another vision of the world, has led only to the *return of the most dangerous traditionalism*.”<sup>57</sup> By italicizing “experience,” “another culture,” and “dangerous traditionalism,” Afary and Anderson imply that Foucault not only disavowed his position on the Iranian Revolution; more importantly, he recognized the significance of the Enlightenment, and not any other *culture*, as the only global project without totalitarian consequences.

*The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, published in 1994, was largely conceived on the premise that Foucault’s thinking swerved remarkably in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Roy Boyne locates this shift in his theories between the first, second, and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*.

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<sup>56</sup> Foucault, *Ibid.*, p. 266.

<sup>57</sup> Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment,” cited and italicized in Afary and Anderson, p. 137.

Whereas in his earlier writings, “genealogies of power/knowledge seem to exclude all notion of truth, enlightenment, self-understanding or effective political strategy,” in his later work, this doctrine “gives way to a sense of renewed ethical and social engagement...There is the suggestion of a certain Utopian residue.”<sup>58</sup>

On the question of agency and transindividual subjectivity, many feminists were chagrined. Jana Sawicki observed, “Foucault’s preoccupation with subjectivity and practices of self in his later writings have been puzzling and disappointing—even embarrassing.” His new position appeared on the surface to “fly in the face of his earlier proclamation of the death of man and his anti-authoritarian predilections for anonymous authorship.” It was more than puzzling, it was disturbing. “Had Foucault, the notorious post-humanist, recanted?”<sup>59</sup> Putting aside the ultimate meanings and consequences of his late thematic shift, a close scrutiny of his post-1980 writings *does* suggest that the Iranian evolution left a profound mark on his views on history, truth, subjectivity, and emancipatory politics.

In contrast to Afary and Anderson’s suggestion, I argue that not only did he refrain from reversing his position on the Iranian Revolution, he expanded his *reportage* into a more coherent philosophy of the Enlightenment. Rather than a simple call upon Reason, Foucault considered *Aude sapere* (“dare to know,” “have the courage, the audacity, to know”) to signify “a process in which men participate collectively and ...an act of courage to be accomplished personally.”<sup>60</sup> In a rare attempt to define modernity, Foucault read the Iranian Revolution *back into* Kant’s *Was ist Aufklärung?* He deviates from speaking of modernity as an epoch, or “set of features characteristic of an epoch.”

Thinking back on Kant’s text, I wonder whether we may not envisage modernity rather as an attitude than as a period of history. And by “attitude” I mean a mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people; in the end, a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging, and presents itself as a task.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Roy Boyne, *Foucault and Derrida, The Other Side of Reason*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1990, p. 144.

<sup>59</sup> Jana Sawicki, “Foucault, Feminism and Questions of Identity,” in Gutting, op cit, pp. 286-87.

<sup>60</sup> Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment?” in Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, p. 35

<sup>61</sup> Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment?” p. 39.

In describing what he meant by an attitude, Foucault showed a closer affinity with Baudelaire's conception of modernity than that of Kant. For Baudelaire, Foucault wrote in the same essay, "modernity is the attitude that makes it possible to grasp the 'heroic' aspect of the present moment...it is the will to 'heroize' the present." Furthermore, "this deliberate, difficult attitude consists in recapturing something eternal that is not beyond the present instant, nor behind it, but within it."<sup>62</sup> Foucault invoked the concept of an attitude to problematize modernity as a historical period, but also, recalling his anti-doctrinal interpretation of Shi'ism, he reiterated that the thread that connects us with the Enlightenment "is not faithfulness to doctrinal elements, but rather a permanent reactivation of an attitude...a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era."<sup>63</sup>

Did Foucault see a moment of a different kind of modernity brought into being in the Iranian Revolution? Did the revolution trigger a reevaluation of his thoughts about the Enlightenment? In my opinion, the answer is yes on both accounts. Consider this: rather than projecting the doctrinal premises of the Enlightenment onto Islam, or depicting Islam as the ideology of the vanguard clergy, Foucault identified religion itself for the Iranian citizen to be a phenomenon through which he or she constructed new modes of subjectivity, authority, and political identity. For Foucault, Islam was neither a burden of the past nor a blue print for the future. Shi'ite Islam was a context for a creative reinvention of the self, the aim of which was to "become someone else you were not at the beginning." In a later work, Foucault reaffirmed his earlier anti-teleological position on the Iranian Revolution. "Never mind whether [a revolution] succeed[s] or fail[s], that is nothing to do with progress, or at least the sign of progress we are looking for."<sup>64</sup>

Whether revolutions are destined to realize the totalitarian potential of their utopian discourse, whether revolutions can really carve out a space that escapes the instrumental rationality of a spiritless world, is a matter of history. In response critics who chastised him for failing to anticipate the post-revolutionary reign of terror in Iran, Foucault emphasized the beautiful indeterminacy of human action. "I cannot write the history of the future, and I am also rather clumsy at foreseeing the past. However, I

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 39

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>64</sup> Foucault, "Kant on Enlightenment and Revolution," *Economy and Society*, vol. 15, 1983, p. 94.

would like to grasp *what is happening right now*, because these days nothing is finished, and the dice are still being rolled.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Foucault, “The Mythical Leader of the Iranian Revolt,” p. 220.

“POLITICAL SPIRITUALITY,” “REVOLUTION,”  
AND THE LIMITS OF POLITICS:  
WHAT WAS FOUCAULT THINKING  
ABOUT IN IRAN?

JEREMY D. POSADAS<sup>1</sup>

Foucault’s writings on the 1978-79 overthrow of the shah in Iran are among the most controversial in his *œuvre*, and given Iran’s current defining position in nuclear- and petroleum-based geopolitics, they may be some of the most directly relevant for “our present.” The ascent of Khomeini; the taking of US hostages and the ascension of Ronald Reagan; the Iran-Iraq War and US support of Saddam Hussein, followed by two US invasions to overthrow this same Hussein; the current influence of a nuclearizing Iran over a US-occupied Iraq: Foucault neither predicted nor influenced these events, but he gave an atypical Western analysis of the event that brought to power the régime that led Iran in all of them. To the degree that Foucault was right about anything in Iran, his writings bear revisiting now. This essay is an attempt to recuperate Foucault’s insights in the Iranian writings, and vindicate their significance for his political thought and, ultimately, for his move between the political and the ethical in the last years of his life.

### **I. Situating Foucault’s Iranian writings**

The Iranian writings have had quite a different reception compared to, say, Foucault’s comments on rape or his dating of the emergence of “the homosexual”—indignant clamor at first, followed by near-total silence.

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<sup>1</sup> The author acknowledges with deep gratitude the friends and colleagues without whose conversation this work would not exist: David Gardner, Heath Reynolds, Timothy Stewart-Winter, Kevin Lotz, Susannah Laramee Kidd; and the members of the 2007 Foucault Seminar at Emory University, especially Lynne Huffer and Mark Jordan.



Since most of the Iranian pieces originally appeared in Italian translation in the newspaper *Corriere della sera*, the largely negative Francophone initial reaction was based on only one or two articles that appeared originally in French. Foucault himself published nothing concerning the Iranian revolution after 1979. Since then, there has been almost no critical analysis of the Iranian writings, decades when Foucault's other work has been extensively interpreted, criticized, and extended; for example, Janet Afary and Kevin Anderson's 2005 *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution* is the sole book-length treatment in English (the book's appendix translates all of Foucault's Iranian writings). When these writings have been considered at all, they have been dismissed by more sympathetic readers as an unfortunate foray into journalism or an embarrassing mis-prediction of political futures (Macey, 1993).

When the Iranian writings have been rejected, it has been on the basis of three charges. First, Foucault is criticized for having misunderstood Islam in general and/or Shi'ism particularly, taking Shi'ism as a monolithic essence or, worse, taking one marginal aspect of Shi'ism as the mainstream of a de-historicized tradition (Leezenberg, 2004; Carrette, 2000; Afary and Anderson, 2005). Second, Foucault is attacked for having misunderstood the ambitions and aims of politically radical Islamism in general or Khomeini's Islamism in particular. He is read as naively missing or blithely ignoring the violent oppression of women, queers, and dissenters that Khomeini's Islamism was waiting to impose (Rodinson, 2005a; Rodinson 2005b; Atoussa 2005; Broyelle and Broyelle 2005; Cohen 2002; Afary and Anderson 2005). Having failed to see what the ayatollahs had been dreaming about all along, Foucault is then thirdly criticized, for having implicitly endorsed or insufficiently condemned the repression undertaken by the Khomeini régime almost immediately after it installed itself (Rodinson, 2005c; Broyelle and Broyelle, 2005; Cohen, 2002; Afary and Anderson, 2005). Foucault is faulted for not repudiating his own writings on Iran, for which he is held to have some liability for encouraging the repression that followed.

Lost in these lines of critique, however, is the very particular project announced in the Iranian writings themselves: "...I would like to grasp *what is happening right now*, because these days nothing is finished, and the dice are still being rolled" (2005h: 220; emphasis in original). Even as Foucault advocated, at the outset of his Iranian journey, for intellectuals "to work on specific objective fields...[to] be inside the pit, the very pit in which the sciences are engaged, where they produce political results," he

also modulated his own role in Iran, from that of an intellectual to that of a “journalist”: to understand “what is happening right now” is “perhaps...the work of a journalist, but it is true that I am nothing but a neophyte” (2005a: 184; 2005h: 220). Foucault’s work in/on Iran should be seen as another attempt on his own part to be other than what he was, to reach another limit in/of his work as a “specific intellectual.” This “journalism” seeks not to “write the history of the future,” nor to engage in “foreseeing the past” (2005h: 220; cf. Stauth, 1994: 379-81). Foucault takes care to note how he wants to understand “not the ‘deep reasons’ for the movement, but the *manner in which it was lived*;...to understand what was going on in the heads of these men and women when they *risked their lives*...” (2005k: 264; emphasis supplied). Given this attentiveness to his role observing the present, Foucault’s writings on the revolution cannot necessarily be judged from the standpoint of actions that occurred subsequent to it.

Foucault the journalist, seeking to grasp “what is happening right now” in the minds of Iranians risking their lives, discerned two distinct moves, two things that the Iranians “are dreaming about”: “...to give a permanent role in political life to the traditional structures of Islamic society” and to “allow the introduction of a spiritual dimension into political life...” (2005e: 207). That is, Foucault discerned the emergence of both a *politicized spirituality* and a *spiritualized politics*. In contrast to most critiques of Foucault on Iran—according to which Foucault misunderstood the nature of either the spirituality that become politicized or the politicization itself—I contend that Foucault’s analysis of each of these movements makes sense with, yet also advances, Foucault’s own previous thinking on power, government, and the political. In the next section, I trace how the *politicization of spirituality* relies on the distinctive ways of conceptualizing religion and power that Foucault explored over the 1970s, but also joins them in a new configuration. Following that, I look at the new concept of spirituality that Foucault began to develop from the end of the 1970s, which yokes the play of truth with the government of the self and others. This is the sense of “spirituality” with which Foucault’s claims about the *spiritualization of politics* should properly be interpreted. Viewed through such a lens, the *spiritualized politics* in Iran showed Foucault a space “outside” of politics, namely, “revolution,” an ultimate limit which Foucault came to see as constituting politics itself. I conclude with a suggestion that Foucault’s Iranian experience changed his thinking about the subject itself. The Iranian writings, therefore, significantly touch on all three of the axes by which Foucault defined his work.

## II. Spirituality politicized

On its face, Foucault's analysis of the Iranian revolution seems to flow from several overly theologically simplistic or ahistorically essentialized notions of Islamic, and specifically Shi'i, doctrines of spirituality, truth, and politics. Such notions are concentrated in the first and longest article to appear originally in French: "About What Are the Iranians Dreaming?" For instance, Foucault claims that "there is an absence of hierarchy in the clergy" (2005d: 202) on the basis of which he asserts that the "Grand Ayatollahs...were not enthroned by anybody....If they wanted to go against the current, they would lose this power, which essentially resides in the interplay of speaking and listening." Although Maxime Rodinson (2005c: 267), one of Foucault's early critics concerning Iran, blasted Foucault's ignorance of Khomeini's political doctrines of clerical rule, Islam specialist Michiel Leezenberg notes that "before 1978, nobody outside a small circle of specialists knew of the political ideas among the Iranian shi'ite *'ulamâ*, let alone about the existence and political doctrines of Khomeini" (Leezenberg 2004: 104). But even Leezenberg finds that Foucault erred in taking, as representative of majority Shi'i doctrine, the work of both Ali Shariati and Henri Corbin. Shariati "developed a view of shi'ite Islam as the 'religion of the oppressed'" and "emphasized shi'ite Islamic spirituality as an antidote to Marxist-inspired materialism" (ibid.: 107). Corbin's "representation of Islamic thought...is simultaneously guided by the essentialist idea that the 'real' Islamic spirituality is to be found in the more esoteric and Gnostic branches of shi'ism in Iran" (ibid.). Corbin, too, called for "Iranian Muslims to preserve their 'traditional spiritual culture' against western influence" (ibid.). Leezenberg's critiques are echoed by others, both western and non-western (ibid., 104-5).

Such facile appropriations of Islamic thought might well doom Foucault's interpretations of Iran, if doctrine were his primary framework for interpreting religion. But from the 1961 *History of Madness* through the unpublished fourth volume of *History of Sexuality (Confessions of the Flesh)*, Foucault's method is to argue from religious practices and institutions, not doctrines. This approach is evident in Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France in the years immediately prior to the Iranian writings. In the 1975 lectures, published in English as *Abnormal* (2003: 167-230), Foucault discusses the practice of Christian confession and exorcism (including the convulsion of bodies supposedly possessed by demons), rather than formal statements of Christian doctrines of sin and demons. Likewise, in the 1978 lectures, *Security, Territory, and*

*Population* (2007: 115-226), Foucault discusses the nature of the Christian pastorate in terms of its practices of power over Christian individuals, rather than the doctrinal *loci* of the Church or the sacerdotal priesthood. When he turns to Islam, Foucault maintains this privileging of practices and institutions over doctrines: he is not interested in Islamic religion as a body of doctrines, “an ideology, which would help to mask contradictions or form a sort of sacred union between a great many divergent interests” (2005: 252). Instead, Islam provides “the vocabulary, the ceremonial, the timeless drama into which one could fit the historical drama of a people that pitted its very existence against that of its sovereign” (*ibid.*). Foucault is focused on the concrete practices he observed—a revolt of a people against its ruler—for which Islamic doctrine provided discursive resources for action rather than definitive meanings.

In order to appreciate fully how Foucault’s observations of concrete religious practice in Iran aligned with his previous study of religion, it helps to first see the context of political action for these religious practices. Here, again, we see that Foucault’s analysis is consistent with his earlier conceptualizations of politics, particularly his re-worked notions of “domination” and “resistance.” Domination, for Foucault, is not a single line that separates society into two classes, “dominator” and “dominated.” Rather, domination is a “multiform production of relations of domination which are partially susceptible of integration into overall strategies” (1980: 142). Foucault delineates three main complexes of domination-relations in Iran. Repeatedly, he stresses the immense force of Iran’s Army: it is both “apparently the fifth-largest army in the world” and “a regional intervention force throughout Southwest Asia” (2005b: 193). Suppression in society by the military was accompanied by the division of the spoils of the national economy among the shah’s family and close associates: “To one of the brothers, the real estate; to the twin sister, the drug traffic; to her son, the trade in antiquities; the sugar to Félix Agaian; the arms trade to Toufanian; the caviar for Davalou” (2005c: 198). Underlying both the vast army and such “corruption,” of course, was Iran’s dual geopolitical role, as both a major source of petroleum and as a part of the Middle Eastern front in the Cold War. Iran is a “land, both above and below the surface, has strategic importance at a global level” and a land of “oil workers and peasants at the frontiers of empires” (2005e: 209; 2005: 222).

Yet resistance, in Foucault’s theory of politics, is coextensive with domination: “Where there is power, there is resistance...These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network” (1990: 95).

Foucault saw Islam as a *politicized spirituality* because it provided both discursive and non-discursive resources for resisting the military, economic, and geopolitical domination-relations pervading Iran in the time of the Pahlavis. Discursively, Islam provided a historical framework for understanding the conflict between the shah and the ayatollah: “The situation in Iran can be understood as a great joust under the traditional emblems, those of the king and the saint...the despot faced with the man who stands up bare-handed and is acclaimed by a people” (2005e: 204). Foucault observed this discursive contest enacted bodily at a mausoleum honoring a descendant of the eighth Shi’i imam. Close by this mausoleum the shah had buried his own father, but “in the rivalry between the dead, the [great-grand]son of the imam wins, every Friday, over the father of the king” (2005d: 199).

Foucault linked this definitely spiritual (and only implicitly political) practice with one that joined the spiritual and the political: the long sequence of demonstrations against the shah, usually honoring those who had been killed in a previous demonstration: “Tehran honored the dead of Abadan, Tabriz those of Isfahan, and Isfahan those of Qom” (2005d: 200). A *politicized spirituality* was present not only in these demonstrations, but “from celebrations to commemorations, from worship, to sermons, to prayers” (ibid.). But the demonstrations, in which Iranians faced the well-armed military directly, were the most explicitly political expression of spirituality: Foucault characterizes them as “a sort of constantly recommended liturgy, a community experience,” and “a political and juridical act, carried out collectively within religious rituals...” (2005j: 254). Although these demonstrations fit within Foucault’s prior framework of domination and resistance, they revealed an aspect of religious experience that he had not thematized: religion as a means of resistance rather than domination.<sup>2</sup> Already we begin to see how Foucault both deployed and expanded his methods for studying spirituality and politics in trying to grasp *what is going on right now* in Iran.

### III. From politicized spirituality to spiritualized politics

To read the Iranian writings in light of Foucault’s general approach to interpreting religion—in which he emphasizes other-than-discursive aspects and considers discursive ones only in relationship to the other-

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<sup>2</sup> Foucault does not see such resistance as available only in Islam: see Foucault 2005a: 186-7.

than-discursive—somewhat lessens the force of criticism focused on his mis-understanding or mis-characterizing of Shi'i doctrine. Such criticism is greatly diminished, however, if one attends carefully to Foucault's novel construction of "spirituality" specifically rather than religion generally.<sup>3</sup> This conceptualization is important because it arises in similar form before and after both Foucault's experience in Iran and his turn to ethics.<sup>4</sup> Foucault made an early sketch of spirituality just a few months before his first trip to Iran, in a May 1978 roundtable with several historians. Because this discussion was not published until 1980, Foucault's contemporaries were not able to read Foucault's Iranian writings in light of it. Curiously, few commentators since then have appreciated how this discussion strongly grounds the Iranian writings in Foucault's broader projects.

In the roundtable, Foucault articulates "spirituality" in terms of the relationship between truth and power, or effects of "veridiction" and "jurisdiction" (1994: 225). Under the former, Foucault places his analyses of "the production of truth [by which] I mean not the production of true utterances but the establishment of domains in which the *practice of true and false* can be made at once ordered and pertinent" (1994: 230, emphasis supplied). The establishment of such domains itself involves one form of power, the power intrinsic to truth: "...the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies, and so on, that at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal, and necessary" (1994: 226-7). But Foucault goes on to join this form of power-in-truth with power as Foucault had spent the past decade imagining it: "...how people are to be graded and examined...individuals trained...how men *govern* (themselves and others)..." (1994: 230).

Foucault calls for resituating "the production of true and false at the heart of historical analysis and political critique" (ibid.) and gives examples from his studies of penal practices and other disciplines. Such a re-

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<sup>3</sup> Stauth (1994: 386-92) offers quite a different reading of "spirituality" than mine here.

<sup>4</sup> Space does not permit me here to address Foucault's longest discussion of spirituality, in his 1982 Collège de France lectures, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*. There, one finds that Foucault incorporates spirituality within his work on the subject's constitution of itself as an ethical subject. Although Foucault emphasizes the relationship between truth and subjectivity, he does not thereby undermine his 1978 presentation of "political spirituality." Indeed, the 1982 lectures show how "spirituality" was a relatively stable concept across Foucault's "ethical turn," integrating the three axes of truth, power, and ethics. See Foucault 2005I: 15-30.

situation will, in turn, reveal “the problem of truth” as “the most general of political problems” (1994, 233). To understand this problem, Foucault invokes a new concept, “political spirituality”: “The search for a new foundation for [distinguishing true and false and governing oneself and others]...the *will* to discover a different way of governing oneself through a different way of dividing up true and false...” (ibid.; emphasis supplied). This phenomenon is *political* because it pertains to power dually, as it operates in the play of true and false and as it operates in the government of the self and others. And it is a *spirituality* because it involves a will that re-works, to the very foundations, these operations of truth and government. Whatever Foucault thought he observed in Iran, we are on the most solid ground to begin with this will to change régimes of veridiction and jurisdiction.

What new games of truth, then, did Foucault think the Iranian revolutionaries were playing? How were these the basis for a new way in which they sought to govern themselves? The most concrete illustration is the cassette tape, of which he said, “If the shah is about to fall, it will largely be due to the cassette tape” (2005g; 219). The cassette was the “tool *par excellence* of counterinformation”: sold “outside the doors of most provincial mosques,” the tapes widely distributed sermons calling for the overthrow of the shah (ibid.). In a wider sense, Islamic institutions sustained a society-wide network of “‘grassroots cells’ of information,” through which flowed accounts of the situation to counter the official ones: “At that very moment, the public relations director...was manufacturing for journalists the ‘international truth’...I heard the mullah, in his corner, manufacturing the ‘Iranian truth’ of the same event” (ibid.). Perhaps the most significant truth-game in Iran concerned the idea of “Islamic government.” Far from endorsing Khomeini’s vision of a supreme leader maintaining strict Islamic law, Foucault noted religious leaders’ views that “Islamic government” would include régimes of property, labor, and gender relations that might seem analogous to Western liberalism, but would be distinctly inflected through Shi’i Quranic interpretation (2005e: 207).

“Islamic government” was most clearly a site of contest over truth and power in the contrast between Islamiyeh and Meybod. The former was a thriving town built under religious leadership, apparently with no government support, after a devastating earthquake; the latter was the name invented for “a town that existed only for bureaucrats [that] had been created from five scattered hamlets, undoubtedly for some land

speculator...thrown on the ground like a rootless geography” (2005b: 189-90; 2005d: 199-200). Foucault’s contrast of the rationalities of government that created these two towns is similar to his studies of 18th- and 19th-century European political theories. From cassette tapes to “Islamic government,” Islam provided the leadership and means for Iranians to reject the truth/power régime of which the shah was the terminal expression. This, then, is the full sense in which Foucault saw *spirituality politicized* in Iran. To dismiss Foucault’s Iranian writings on the basis of mistaken views of Islamic doctrine is to miss his point entirely: the Iranian people were seeking to instantiate a new régime within which doctrine itself could be articulated with government structures in wholly new ways.

#### IV. Politics spiritualized

Islamiyeh, in Foucault’s reading, was a clear example of the “Islamic government” about which the Iranians were dreaming “when, under the threat of bullets, they transform it into a slogan of the streets” (2005e: 207). But this was not the only dream Foucault perceived among the Iranians: they also, he claimed, dreamed about “the introduction of a spiritual dimension into political life, in order that it would not be, as always, the obstacle to spirituality, but its receptacle, its opportunity, and its ferment” (ibid.). Foucault’s excitement over this *spiritualization of politics* is often taken by critics as an endorsement of Khomeini’s vision of a politics normed to a strict interpretation of Shi’i law. But, as with critiques over Foucault’s understanding doctrine, this argument does not sufficiently take into account Foucault’s other work, especially on politics (which was certainly well-known by the time he went to Iran). As noted above, Foucault situated Iran’s politics within a framework of the interplay between strategies of domination and resistance. This interplay is the basis for all social life, since “[r]elations of power are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships (economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations), but are immanent in the latter...” (1990: 94).

Within the interplay of domination and resistance, strategies of domination tend to “crystallize,” for a given period, into an institutional integration “embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies” (1990: 93). Such crystallization does not eliminate resistance, because resistance occurs wherever there are effects of domination. Foucault does acknowledge that strategies of resistance can crystallize analogously to strategies of domination—“it is doubtless the



strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes revolution possible”—but this happens only “occasionally” (1990: 96). Thus, while Foucault strenuously argues for the absolute coextensiveness of domination and resistance, he implies an advantage for domination-effects in terms of their ability to cohere, albeit never permanently, into multiple hegemonies, and thereby to structure the field of power-relations.<sup>5</sup> His experience in Iran, however, confronted him with precisely the rare sort of moment in which resistance crystallizes at a much faster rate than domination. He was forced to consider a political category that he otherwise tended to avoid, causing him to modify and deepen his theory of power.

Not only this, for as he thematized “revolution” in ways new for him, Foucault discovered a revolution that challenged prevailing (Marxist) notions of what a “revolution” is supposed to be (cf. Stauth, 1994: 393-8). His claim, therefore, that *what is happening right now* involved a *spiritualization of politics* was a challenge both to the absence of “revolution” in his own political theory and dominant understandings of it in others’. Foucault saw in Iran a “tidal wave without a military leadership, without a vanguard, without a party” (2005f: 211): without, that is, any of the material or ideological armament necessary for modern revolution. Foucault especially noted the absence class-division as the engine of revolution, a hallmark of revolution defined by Marxism. Instead of “the class struggle [or] social confrontations,” Foucault saw a revolt that “spread without internal splits or conflicts” (2005j: 251; 2005f: 211). The movement brought together parties that should have been divided by class interests: “...students who are more westernized and more Marxist than the mullahs from the countryside”; “oil workers...[and] the bourgeoisie of the bazaar...”; the “modern industrialized sector...[and] the ‘traditional’ sector...” (2005i: 241). This unity meant that there was no vanguard that was driving the revolution, but rather “a whole people that overthrew an all-powerful regime...” (2005i: 241).

Hence, the Iranian revolution’s significance would not be found “in its conformity to a recognized ‘revolutionary’ model...” (ibid.). Instead, three

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<sup>5</sup> This aspect of Foucault’s power-theory should not be understood as a claim that domination always ultimately eliminates resistance: indeed, Foucault’s very point is to show the impermanence and contingency of domination in light of equally omnipresent resistance. Rather, Foucault was seeking to counter Marxism’s emphasis on a revolution as the primary lens for examining power with his own idea of resistance as constitutive of power itself.

dynamics revealed the *spiritualized politics* that would define this event. The first is the thing that fundamentally and continuously sustained Foucault's fascination: the willingness of Iranians to risk their life demonstrating against one of the most powerful militaries in the world. Foucault found remarkable how Iranians again and again revolted "at the risk of a bloodbath," "with bare hands," "half a million men [in] the streets of Tehran, up against machine guns and tanks," "in their millions [facing] the machine-guns bare-chested" (2005e: 204, 207; 2005f: 211; 2005j: 254). Such risk-of-life grounds Foucault's Iranian writings in the moment that defines the fundamental power-relationship: "Even when the power relation is completely out of balance ...the other still has the option of killing himself, of leaping out the window, or of killing the other person" (1997: 292). Risk-of-life brings one to the ultimately limit of power, when the life of oneself or another is at stake. Yet this is also the limit of spirituality, insofar as spirituality involves seeking a new government for oneself and others: one's own death or another's is the final possible transformation in the governmental relationship. The Iranians' bodily actions pressed politics to its limit, where it unavoidably engaged the very conditions of possibility of spirituality.

The revolution brought politics to its limit in another sense: by the formation of a collective will. The mention of "collective will" should flag that Foucault's reflections on revolution extend beyond Marxism to the foundation of liberalism itself: the establishment of a polity by the aggregation of individuals' wills into a social contract from which derives all sovereignty. Foucault almost seems gleeful in noting that "[t]he collective will is a political myth... Nobody has ever seen the 'collective will,' and, personally, I thought that the collective will was like God, like the soul, something one would never encounter" (2005j: 253). But he saw it in Iran, and it involved not only the unity described earlier, but in the focus on "an absolutely clear, particular aim," namely, "the rejection of submission to foreigners...of a dependent foreign policy, the American interference that was visible everywhere..." but also "the rejection by a people...of everything that had constituted, for centuries, its political destiny" (ibid.). Yet this collective will made a claim not only on politics (the interplay of domination and resistance), but on the Iranians' relationship with themselves: "Our way of being, our relationship with others, with things, with eternity, with God, etc., must be completely changed, and there will only be a true revolution if this radical change in our experience takes place" (2005j: 255). The collective will sought a comprehensive transformation of the government of the self and others—

the core of Foucaultian spirituality—and thereby brought politics again to its limits.

In still a third way, Foucault sensed that the spirituality of the revolution pushed politics to its limits, or rather, to and *beyond* its limits. For even as the collective will pressed towards a positive vision (removal of the shah, establishment of “Islamic government”), Foucault characterized this collective will as refusing to participate in the everyday interplay of domination and resistance that constituted conventional politics. Despite the omnipresence of domination and resistance, the revolution accomplished a “strike *in relation to* politics,” in which the Iranians refused not only “to sustain in any manner the current system,” but also refused “to step aside in favor of a political battle over a future constitution, over social issues, over foreign policy...” (2005f: 212; emphasis original). Foucault explicitly and repeatedly contrasted the collective will and “politics”: “...it is a question of knowing when and how the will of all will give way to politics ...of knowing if this will wants to do so and if it must do so” (2005f: 213). That Foucault conceived of a “refusal” of politics signals how much he was willing to modify his own power-theory in light of his Iranian experience. Risk-of-life is an instance of *spiritualized politics*, because in it people verge on the terminal transformation of the government of oneself and others. In contrast, the refusal of politics is a moment in the spiritualization of politics that seeks to re-establish a basis for government of the self and others at all. The one constitutes the limit beyond which there can be no more politics; the other constitutes the limit outside of which one can dream of a new kind of politics (without any guarantee, though, that exactly this politics will emerge the day after one steps back from the limit). With the collective will that traverses from one to the other, one can at last see what Foucault really was thinking about when he asserted that the Iranian revolution was an emergence of a *political spirituality*.

## V. What does the revolutionary think about?

In his last writing on Iran, Foucault makes a few brief comments that point to an even further fold in his thinking about spirituality and politics, one which could well position the Iranian writings as a key in the “ethical turn” of Foucault’s final years. After concisely summarizing the emergence of “revolution” in the 18th century as a particular category of historical analysis and political action, Foucault declares, “One does not dictate to those who risk their lives in the face of power. *Is it right to rebel,*

*or not?* Let us leave this question open” (2005k: 266). In asking this single question, one is simultaneously evoking a basic division of true and false and placing oneself in the fundamental political moment—the risk-of-life. This question is the heart of the intertwining between truth and power in political spirituality; and, if my explication above is tenable, this question brings one to the very limits of politics. But Foucault continues with a startling statement: “It is a fact that people rise up, and it is through this that a subjectivity (not that of great men, but that of anyone) introduces itself into history and gives it its life” (ibid.). *Is it right to rebel, or not?* This game of truth constitutes oneself not just as a subject of power, but as a subject at all. Foucault suggests that in Iran he discovered that the human is constituted *qua* subject in the risk of one’s life, in the refusal of a given politics, and in demonstrating one’s dream of, and will for, another politics. Therefore, to take the Iranian writings seriously is perhaps to perceive the explicitly *political* horizon within which Foucault’s problematization of the *ethical* subject should be appreciated. Much further work remains to be done, but the *political spirituality* analyzed in the Iranian writings allows such Foucaultian ethical categories as the “care of the self” and the “aesthetics of existence” to be understood in their full political force, offering political grounds for an ethics sometimes dismissed as enervating political resistance in favor of aesthetic self-creation.

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**SECTION VIII:**

**GENETICS, GENOMICS  
AND RACIALIZED LIFE**



REGULATION AND DISCIPLINE  
IN THE GENOMIC AGE:  
A CONSIDERATION OF DIFFERENCES  
BETWEEN GENOMICS AND EUGENICS

MARINA LEVINA

In his early writings, Michel Foucault (1978: 139) defines two forms through which power over life operates: the disciplines, or “anatomopolitics of the human body,” and the regulatory controls, or “bio-politics of the population.” The first is concerned with disciplining the body as a machine and the second one with regulating the body as a site for life itself. Foucault juxtaposes discipline and regulation by establishing contrasts between technology that acts on the body, and that which acts upon life itself; that which acts upon individuals and that which acts upon population; and that which disciplines and that which controls. This essay examines how eugenics and genomics function as disciplinary and regulatory apparatuses respectively. It argues that cultural reaction to genomics as the second coming of eugenics overlooks important differences in how these scientific and political enterprises construct and manage bodies and communities. In fact, many humanities and social science writings on the topic conflate genetics and genomics. They are, however, different scientific enterprises with distinct research foci. Genetics is the study of genes and genomics is the study of the whole genome. As Muin J.Khoury explains (2003: 261), “the practices of medical genetics have traditionally focused on those conditions that are known to be due to mutations in single genes (e.g. Huntington’s disease), whole chromosomes (e.g. trisomy 21 in Down syndrome), or associated with birth defects and developmental disabilities.... On the other hand, the practices of genomics in medicine and public health will center on information resulting from variation at one or multiple loci and strong interactions with environmental factors (broadly defined to include diet,

drugs, infections agents, chemicals, physical agents, and behavioral factors).”

This essay postulates that Michel Foucault’s theoretical formulation of disciplinary and regulatory/security apparatus is essential in examining what is at stake in eugenic and genomic research.<sup>1</sup> Eugenics functioned as a disciplinary apparatus, which used blood and descent to identify personal essence, classify “unfit” bodies, and maximize the fitness of nation-states. In contrast, as a regulatory apparatus, genomics studies differences between and within populations in order to generate information, control outcomes, and regulate life itself. In fact metaphors of “information,” “program,” and “network” structure genomic discourse. In the process they conceptualize life as a fragmented, fractured and fluid entity, subject to information searches and flow regulations. Moreover, metaphors of program and information associated with genomic research reconstitute power/knowledge dynamics, which Foucault associated with disciplinary apparatuses, into a control/information regulatory system. This represents a shift from anatomo-politics to biopolitics, from the logic of discipline to the logic of regulation, from power/knowledge to control/information. The main problematic of genomic research is not how to maintain the health of a nation-state, but rather how to regulate and control global populations. Therefore, genomics can be best understood as a science of globalization enabled by global neoliberal economies. What is at stake in the biopolitics of genomic research is the very form that power takes in the information age.

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<sup>1</sup> In an endnote Michel Senellart, editor for *Security, Territory, Population*, explains Foucault’s often interchangeable use of regulatory and security mechanism: “Foucault distinguishes security mechanisms from disciplinary mechanisms for the first time in the final lecture (March 17, 1976) of the 1975-1976 course “*Il faut défendre la société*” p. 219; “Society Must be Defended” p. 246. However, the concept of “security” is not taken up in *La Volonté de savoir* where, in opposition to the disciplines, which are exercised on the bodies of individuals, Foucault prefers to speak of “regulatory controls” that take charge of the health and life of populations (p. 183; *History of Sexuality, vol. 1*: 145)” (Foucault, 2007: n. 5, 24). For purposes of this essay, I will use regulatory and security apparatuses interchangeably to symbolize a departure from disciplinary mechanisms.

## Eugenics, Power/Knowledge, and Disciplining of the Nation-State Body

The term *eugenics* was first used in 1883 by Francis Galton and comes from a Greek root meaning “good in birth” or “noble in heredity.” Daniel Kevles writes (2001: xiii), “[Galton] intended it to denote the “science” of improving human stock by giving the more suitable races of strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable.” Eugenics functioned as a disciplinary apparatus, which used blood and descent as interlaced categories to render individual bodies more appropriate and useful. Foucault (1978: 139) defined disciplinary apparatus as “centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls.” He further elaborated that disciplinary technique “centers on the body, produces individualizing effects, and manipulates the body as a source of forces that have to be rendered both useful and docile” (Foucault, 2003: 249).

Bodies were disciplined through marriage, sexual activities, educational programs, racial segregation, and even death. Blood became an especially useful organizational and metaphorical tool because it was thought to embody “the essence” of a person (racial, ethnic, or otherwise), and therefore provide a totalizing account of that person’s identity based on group membership. Eugenics thus provided a quintessentially modern narrative, foregrounding a belief in the essential nature of man, progress, and nationhood. As Jeffrey Weeks (1995) argues, eugenics was based on assumptions that “inferior” races would hinder economic and imperial expansion of Western nations. Descent was also defined in terms of blood; race was thereof based on blood, not on a person's color or religious beliefs (Scales-Trent, 2001). For example, Hitler asserted blood is unchangeable and eternal: “classes vanish, classes alter themselves, the destinies of men undergo changes, but something always remains: the nation as such, as the substance of flesh and blood. To us [National Socialists] blood not only means something corporeal, but it is in a racial sense, the soul, which has as its external field of expression the body” (Linke, 1999). The slogan *Blood and Soil* was representative of the nationalist project that linked German identity with soil and peasant identity. Peasants, or *volk*, were seen as authentically German-only Aryans working on the land—an essential blood source for the nation (Linke, 1999). At the heart of the *Blood and Soil* project was a desire to counteract

the influence of cities and the many opportunities for intermarriage and intersexual activities across races. Educational programs were put in place to instruct people in matters of heredity, marriage and sex.<sup>2</sup> Most often Nazi Germany is the only historical context in which eugenics—as a disciplinary apparatus—is discussed. This, however, conflates eugenics with the Nazi regime instead of acknowledging eugenics as a widely spread and accepted scientific discourse that was used at the time to administer socio-political apparatuses all over the world. As a scientific discourse it was also widely accepted in the United States and other countries.

In the United States, eugenics reverberated fears of “catching black” permeating American culture at the time; fears steeped in the belief in the essentialist properties of blood. For example, Eva Saks writes (1988: 30), “race categories in America have long been based on ideas about “blood quanta”... African Americans were identified by the “one drop of blood rule,” which defined a person with even a drop of “black blood” as black... [In the American South] miscegenation laws used the metaphor of “black blood” to separate the legal concept of race from skin color. The skin could lie, allowing a person to pass, but the blood represented ‘serological truth;’ it defined and identified race.” The essentialism of blood as a racial classification tool had a direct affect on medical interventions into the health of individuals. One such example was sickle cell anemia—a disease considered to predominantly affect African-American populations. However, as Melbourne Tapper argues (1999: 3), “sickling today is viewed as a black-related disease not simply because the majority of people suffering from the disease are blacks, but because various medical sciences in tandem with anthropology have represented it as a disease of ‘black people’ since the turn of the twentieth century.” In fact, until the 1940s, sickle cell anemia was viewed as a disease of “Negro blood,” passed on to the white population through interracial relationships (Wailoo, 1997). This was not a simple matter of “bad” or “prejudice”

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<sup>2</sup> Ulrike Linke (1999: 206) cites a number of proverbs that were published in the Nazi folklore journal *Volk und Rasse* in 1936 under the title *Living Racial Hygiene in the German Proverb*. These included: “Only those who are alike should exchange their hands in marriage”; “Race sticks to race”; “To marry into the blood (close relative) is seldom good [blood identity should not encompass incest]”; “The closer to the blood, the worse the offspring”; “It is in the blood, if it was in the clothes, one could brush it out”; “Three things make the best couples: same blood, same passion, same age,” and “First healthy blood, then a large estate and a pretty hat.”

science. The existence of racially identifiable blood—as ascribed by eugenic science—was a real material experience for both physicians and patients. Keith Wailoo argues (137), “for many physicians in the early 20th century, ‘Negro Blood’ was a term with clear technological origins and with biological, social, and public health meanings. These physicians based their view on what was at that time hematological evidence and scientific understanding of ... the disorder.”

These examples from Nazi Germany and the United States illustrate that, at its core, eugenics was a pervasive and scientifically legitimate exercise in classification, disciplining, and improvement of individual bodies. Through its elaborate classification system, aimed to separate the unfit, eugenics was exercised as power over life: power to make die, make reproduce, and make hygienic. Nikolas Rose (2001), for example, describes the two great state-sponsored biopolitical strategies at the start of the 20th century. The first was a hygiene program that sought to instill habits conducive to physical and moral health into each individual. The second sought to maximize the fitness of the population via the site of reproduction by acting upon reproductive decisions and capacities of individuals. In all of those cases, the focus was on maximizing the fitness of the entire nation state through disciplining of individual bodies. As Paul Rabinow and Nicolas Rose (2006: 210) write, “eugenics—the improvement of the biological stock of the population—did indeed take both negative and positive forms, but in each case, it was directed to maximizing racial fitness in the service of a biological struggle between nation states.” The eugenic disciplinary apparatus sought to maximize power over life through a production of systems of knowledge used to define and classify “fit” and “unfit” bodies. It is through this dynamic of power/knowledge that eugenics, as a disciplinary measure, was exercised by nation-states. In fact, eugenics served a particularly legitimizing role in the emergence of modern nation-states: it provided a scientific discourse that characterized individual bodies as stand-ins for the nation-state mini-territories onto which power was enacted and which in turn served as representatives of the nation-state itself. Therefore what was truly at stake in the disciplining of individual bodies was the health of the nation-state. As Foucault (2003) argued, the concealment of techniques of domination involved in disciplines guaranteed that everyone could exercise their own sovereign rights thanks to the sovereignty of the State. As a disciplinary apparatus, eugenics sought to excise difference, homogenize communities, and maximize fitness of nation-states. Genomics, however, represents a shift to the study of population, risk management, and information flows:

an apparatus of regulation and security necessitated by cultural, political and economical forces of globalization.

## **Genomics, Control/Information, and Regulating Global Population**

One of the most significant genomic scientific accomplishments has been the development of the International HapMap Project. Completed in 2005 as part of an international consortium whose goal was to develop a haplotype map of the human genome, the project aimed to study various populations across the globe in order to catalog and identify genetic difference. While the Human Genome Project confirmed that the more than 3 billion "letters" of DNA in each human were 99.9 percent identical, analyzing the small fraction that differ—including about 10 million distinct, single-letter variations, also called SNPs—remained a daunting task (*Science Daily*, 2007). An international team of research institutions comprising the HapMap project aimed to do just that. The project described itself as:

A multi-country effort to identify and catalog genetic similarities and differences in human beings. Using the information in the HapMap, researchers would be able to find genes that affect health, disease, and individual responses to medications and environmental factors. The Project was collaboration among scientists and funding agencies from Japan, the United Kingdom, Canada, China, Nigeria, and the United States. The goal of the International HapMap Project was to compare the genetic sequences of different individuals to identify chromosomal regions where genetic variants are shared. By making this information freely available, the Project aimed to help biomedical researchers find genes involved in disease and responses to therapeutic drugs. In the initial phase of the Project, genetic data are being gathered from four populations with African, Asian, and European ancestry. Ongoing interactions with members of these populations are addressing potential ethical issues and providing valuable experience in conducting research with identified populations (About the HapMap).

The HapMap Project illustrates key differences between eugenics and contemporary genomic research. While the former aims to excise difference amongst citizens of a nation-state—to purify racial or ethnic group membership—the latter studies populations in order to identify, generate, and utilize difference. In genomic research, difference is not an obstacle to discipline, but rather a site of information about life itself. Once the overall similarities within a population are established—this is

why it is very significant that we are 99.9 percent alike in our genetic makeup—differences become highly valued sources of potentially important information. The entire geopolitical approach to difference is therefore unique to genomics as a regulatory apparatus. Foucault (2003: 249) contrasts regulatory apparatus with disciplinary:

And we also have a second technology which is centered not upon the body but upon life: a technology which brings together the mass effects characteristic of a population, which tries to control the series of random events that can occur in a living mass, a technology which tries to predict the probability of those events (by modifying it, if necessary), or at least to compensate for their effects... It is not a matter of taking the individual at the level of individuality but, on the contrary, of using overall mechanisms and acting in such a way as to achieve overall states of equilibration or regularity; it is, in a word, a matter of taking control of life and the biological processes of man-as-species and of ensuring that they are not disciplined, but regularized.

Here, biopolitics symbolizes a broader approach toward the regulation of life as a biological process. It introduces projects for “making live”; projects that are bio-ethical, bio-economical, and bio-scientific in nature (Rabinow and Rose, 2006). Taken together they form a biopolitical complex aimed at the study and management of populations, not in order to exclude the unfit, but to gather information and control outcomes. As Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (2006: 207) argue, the HapMap project, a “contemporary programme to identify biological differences... is not undertaken in the name of population purity, but of national economic development, the search of health in biosocial communities, and the growing sense of many individuals that genetics in some way holds the key to their ‘identity.’” Therefore through its biopolitical complex—including HapMap, personal genomics services, disease sequencing, DNA laws, ancestry searches and others—genomics collects information, calculates probabilities, and manages risks. In the process life is reconceptualized, reconfigured and reconstructed as information strings to be decoded then encoded, cracked then written, and in general to be scientifically discovered, analyzed, and understood.

In fact, metaphors of “information,” “program,” and “network” have structured and shaped genomic research.<sup>3</sup> These metaphors materialize life

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<sup>3</sup> The 2001 PBS documentary *Cracking the Code of Life* illustrates this tendency in the genomic discourse. It starts with lines of codes flooding the television screen. The letters G, T, C, and A cover the screen as Robert Krulwich narrates:

as information and propose the solving of life's mysteries as a project of decoding (Kay, 2000; Fox Keller, 2000). The metaphor of genetic "program"—founded in the information discourse and popularized with advances in computer science—implies network processes with interconnected elements. It was first used in the early 1960s by geneticists François Jacob and Jacques Monod to differentiate between regulatory and structural genes. The former regulated the rate of protein formation and the latter affected protein structure. They also introduced other parts of genetic apparatuses and, in 1961, used the term "genetic program" to illustrate how these various elements worked together in the organism (Fox Keller, 2000). While the metaphor of a program did not dispute the centrality of the gene in the organism, or the importance of genetic information in the DNA, it did allow for gene interaction and introduced a certain ambiguity into the narrative of organism development. In other words, the metaphor of genetic program has become a more complex and sophisticated way of constructing genomic bodies. Hence, metaphors of "information," "program," and "network" work together to construct a particular understanding of the body in the age of genomics. Whereas the eugenic body was essentialized in terms of blood and racial identity, the genomic body is a fragmented and fractured entity; a subject for "database" information searches, an entity to be classified and understood. And while bodies were always subject to scientific inquiries, never has the technology allowed us to go deeper—to penetrate the body until it disappears all together. As Katherine Hayles argues (1999: 2), when bodies are reconfigured in terms of information, then information loses its body or comes "to be conceptualized as an entity separate from the material forms in which it is thought to be embedded." In other words, genomics reconfigures bodies, and life itself, in terms of information that they can provide.

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"When I look at this—and these are the three billion chemical letters, instructions for a human being—my eyes glaze over.... For the past ten years, scientists all over the world have been painstakingly trying to read the tiny instructions buried inside our DNA. And now, finally, the Human Genome has been decoded." Craig Venter continues: "We are at the moment that scientists wait for. This is what we wanted to do, you know? We are examining and interpreting the genetic code." And Francis Collins, the director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, adds: "The ultimate imaginable thing that one could do scientifically... is to go and look at our own instruction book and then try to figure out what it's telling us." Eric Lander proceeds, "We have opened a box here that has got a huge amount of valuable information. It is the key to understanding disease and in the long run to curing diseases."



Therefore, genomics, as a security apparatus, emphasizes a shift from power/knowledge to control/information. The former establishes parameters, disciplines bodies, and fixes categories. The latter gathers information, directs flows, and controls movement. Freed from establishing norms and disciplining racialized bodies, genomics *raison d'être* is to gather, qualify, and manage information. Information, however, can never be stabilized as knowledge, otherwise processes of gathering will stop and apparatuses will cease to function. As such, it is never done; its very existence depends on constantly being in-flux. While discipline apparatuses rely on static and confined institutions within which individual's bodies are subjugated, Michel Foucault (2007: 45) argues that "the apparatuses of security... have the constant tendency to expand; they are centrifugal. New elements are constantly being integrated.... Security therefore involves organizing, or anyways allowing the development of ever-wider circuits." Through constant and consistent information gathering genomic research does not look to eliminate risk all together, but rather to note and regulate its movement through the population. In the process, as illustrated by the HapMap Project, genomics aim to regulate and control global populations. Nikolas Rose states, for example, those contemporary rationalities, guiding the administration of life, are posed differently than they were in the first half of the 20th century. He writes, "It is no longer a question of seeking to classify, identify, and eliminate or constrain those individuals bearing a defective constitution, or to promote the reproduction of those whose biological characteristics are most desirable, in the name of the overall fitness of the population, nation or race. Rather, it consists in a variety of strategies that try to identify, treat, manage or administer those individuals, groups or localities where risk is seen to be high" (Rose 2001: 7).

What is at stake in genomic research is the constant and consistent regulation and control of global populations. Much like eugenics can be tied to the development of nation-states, genomics can be analyzed as a science of globalization. Problematics illustrated by the HapMap Project are unique to the context of globalization, which has seen an unprecedented flow of information and populations across real and imagined boundaries. In the global world, control is irrevocably tied to the collection and movement of information. Genomics is one of the contemporary security apparatuses that struggle to understand, manage, and regulate these global flows. At the same time, freedom of movement is essential to security apparatuses, as it allows for "circulations to take place, of controlling them, sifting the good and the bad, ensuring that

things are always in movement, constantly moving around, continually going from one point to another, but in such a way that the inherent dangers of this circulation are cancelled out” (Foucault, 2007: 65). Genomics is dedicated to the collection, distribution, and circulation of information about life itself; the project is to make more life, more information, and more freedom. Therefore, genomic research is enabled by global neoliberal economies, which prioritize freedom of enterprise, freedom of circulation, and freedom of distribution. Michel Foucault himself links apparatuses of security to the development of a general principle of liberalism. He argues that the emergence of population as a pertinent objective for the apparatus of security means that certain elements of free market economy must be allowed to take root. The objective is not an elimination of risk at the level of individuals, but regulation at the level of population. He writes “the game of liberalism—not interfering, allowing free movement, letting things follow their course; *laissez faire, passer et aller*—basically and fundamentally means acting so that reality develops, goes its way, and follows its own course according to the laws, principles, and mechanisms of reality itself” (Foucault 2007: 48). Functioning as a part of global neoliberal economy, genomic research prioritizes distribution of information over production of “fit” bodies. As I have argued above, even the genomic body is reconfigured in terms of information that can be abstracted and distributed through population. Much as Giles Deleuze argued, the current form of economic structures “is no longer directed toward production.... What it seeks to sell is services, and what it seeks to buy, activities. It is a capitalism no longer directed toward production, but toward products, that is toward sales or markets” (Deleuze 1995: 181). As a functional system genomics is never done; it is a science of a global, neoliberal system that prioritizes distribution over production, information over bodies, and regulation over discipline.

The new Internet startup 23andme illustrates the interplay of these theoretical elements in genomic research. Advertised as the first personal genome service, it offers to unlock the secrets of your DNA: “Welcome to 23andMe, a web-based service that helps you read and understand your DNA. After providing a saliva sample using an at-home kit, you can use our interactive tools to shed new light on your distant ancestors, your close family and most of all, yourself.” It offers various services such as the gene journal (“what do your genes say about you?”), ancestry search (“who were your ancient ancestors?”), family inheritance (“do you have your mother’s sense of taste?”), and genome labs (“would you like to search your genome?”). The information is gathered—not to delineate

normal from the abnormal or fit from the unfit—but rather as a point in and of itself. There are no answers given; just probabilities and statistics that link each individual experience to his or her population. For example, the service will access the probability that a person of a certain ethnicity and age will develop a medical condition compared to the average probability that all people of that ethnicity and age will develop the same condition. In other words, one’s probability of developing Lupus might be .14 out of 100 compared to the average of .11 out of 100. Left to his or her own devices in the system of free circulation of information each individual learns to understand his or her body in terms statistical probabilities, population distribution, and risk management. It would be curious to know what Foucault himself would make of such services. Perhaps he would think that \$399 is a small price to pay for unlocking the secrets of your DNA.

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# GENOME SAMPLING AND THE BIOPOLITICS OF RACE

CATHERINE BLISS

## **Genomics, Biopower and Race**

Genomics—the branch of genetics that studies the entire DNA sequence of organisms—is an analytical paradigm that has descended on the scientific community so thoroughly that, in less than ten years, it has not only taken center stage in genetics, but has prompted a burgeoning bioinformatics industry, spurred new models for nanotechnology, expanded research avenues for molecular and cellular biology, and created entirely new fields like pharmacogenomics and synthetic genomics. Genomics is not only the focus of the genetics arm of the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), but is increasingly the focus of all government health institutes. In fact, genomics has advanced to such an influential status that *Science* named Human Genetic Variation the 2007 Breakthrough of The Year. Recent years have witnessed the entry of genomics into the consumer sector and mass media, with the solving of high-profile criminal cases by genomic forensic services and media portrayal of celebrity genealogies and genomes.

When Michel Foucault introduced the concept of biopower in the latter quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, genomics had not yet been conceived. Yet, Foucault's argument that power/knowledge would increasingly focus on the material of life itself proved prescient. Foucault articulates biopower in terms of “what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made power/knowledge an agent of transformation of human life” (Foucault, 1978: 143). This trains our gaze on quotidian practices having to do with the body while opening the biological sciences, especially those focused on the most intrinsic matter of life, up for analysis.

We can see this two-pronged interest in Foucault's schematics of modern disciplinary power and state racism. For Foucault, power operates on the level of the individual body and the state. He writes:

...in thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives. (Foucault, 1980: 39)

In his *Collège de France* seminar on race, Foucault details state racism as a modern modality. He argues that the modern state's rise to power depended upon its manipulation of society's belief in race. Emerging states claimed that there was a war of the races taking place within national bounds and that the removal of degenerate elements would ensure the greater survival of those fit for life. Sciences were enlisted to purge the national body. Family, church, and club deliberated and promoted stringent conditions of group association. Individuals internalized the idea of race, making racial identity a critical part of modern subjectivity.

Although I focus on the state's role in proliferating race policies and conditions, my interest lies in the relationship between the genomic imagination—the vision and limits of possibilities as evidenced by genome project aims and goals—and the state's own racial imagination. This follows Foucault's characterization of biopower as disciplinary power concentrated on controlling the population towards an administration of life, but also as Nikolas Rose develops it for contemporary biopolitics: “a biopolitics that does not seek to legitimate inequality but to intervene upon its consequences...part of the economy of hope that characterizes contemporary biomedicine” (Rose, 2007: 167). This issue of hope is central to genomics, because, as I show with the case of major genome project sampling protocols, projects justify their sampling policies based on specific ethical appeals. Some of these include freeing society from racism, freeing the individual from the oppression of ascription, and addressing Eurocentrism.

While others have analyzed the rise of genomics in terms of informatic entanglements (Thacker, 2000, 2005), ethical frameworks (Rabinow and Bennett, 2007; Rabinow and Rose, 2003, 2006; Rose, 2007), species management (Haraway, 2003), racial ideologies (El-Haj, 2007; Reardon, 2005) and global security issues (Mukhopadyay, 2008), following Steven Epstein (2007), I investigate genomics in terms of a larger policy paradigm

shift; a shift in “frameworks of ideas, standards, formal procedures, and unarticulated understandings that specify how concerns about health, medicine, and the body are made the simultaneous focus of biomedicine and state policy” (Epstein, 2007: 17). Epstein’s case study of late twentieth century health policy suggests that, from the 1970s-1990s, the “one-size-fits-all” approach to biomedicine gave way to what he calls an “inclusion-and-difference” paradigm:

The name reflects two substantive goals: the inclusion of members of various groups generally considered to have been underrepresented previously as subjects in clinical studies; and the measurement, within those studies, of differences across groups with regard to treatment effects, disease progression or biological processes. (Epstein, 2007: 6)

In other words, as scientists structure their research populations by state-sponsored categories of difference, inclusionary policy breeds a biomedical interest in studying the biological difference between those populations. Epstein elucidates the role categories play in creating cohesion, or what he terms “categorical alignment,” between science, state, and society. This research picks up where Epstein leaves off, detailing inclusion-and difference from the 1990s to the present and exploring its practical nuances in the emerging field of genomics.

## **Genome Projects and Sampling**

Due to its recent inauguration, genomics is still predominantly a research-based science. Unlike other forms of science associated with genes and the body, genomics relies on the availability of entire sequences to make comparisons between gene structure and function and to understand the statistical presence of biological components. Thus, genomics has advanced based on large scale sequencing projects that cost billions of dollars and require the coordination of laboratories, institutions, and governments across the world. Projects target specific areas or markers of the genome in order to make research possible. Then, it is up to individual laboratories to interpret the sequence, the goal of which is to bring clinical interventions to the public.

Sampling DNA is a first and most basic step in any large-scale sequencing project. Interestingly, a review of sampling protocols finds that projects have sampled in contrary ways. Projects have gone from no interest in the ancestral origins of sampled DNA to an interest in the race and ethnicity of research subjects, and on to a disavowal of racial categories in favor of

continental terms. Here, I show that each of these shifts has been precipitated by a new strategy for implementing U.S. federal policy on race. Since the early 1990s, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has been reworking its current policies on population, health, and race. These policies have been incrementally incorporated into the funding guidelines for all domestic and international research. So far, four out of the five major human genome sequencing projects have been U.S. led, publicly funded projects. Because the U.S.—the world’s leading spender on healthcare and the dominant member of genome industries and consortia worldwide—was the predominant funder for the public genome projects, how these projects have chosen to sample DNA and present data has evolved from a decidedly U.S. context.

- 1977 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Directive No. 15 mandates federal agencies to use a standard set of race categories
- 1993 NIH Revitalization Act Issues a requirement for the inclusion of women and minorities in health research using OMB standards
- 1994 Healthy People 2000 specifies minority health as a priority
- 1998 Healthy People adopts OMB standards
- 1998 Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) Demographic Rule orders OMB implementation
- 1999 HHS orders OMB implementation
- 2000-1 NIH revises inclusion policy to include implementation in clinical trials
- 2003-5 FDA tightens OMB guidelines for clinical trials

Table 1. *U.S. federal race policies (1977-2007)*

The adoption of these policies by the major federal health research bodies, such as in the case of the NIH Revitalization Act and the FDA’s Demographic Rule, has not only been reflected in the changing sampling protocols engendered by the major genome projects; sampling protocols have changed the terms for justifying biological research and limits of possibilities for understanding human variation. Just as Foucault argues in his detail of state racism and biopower, the state’s own mandates for



administrating the population prove inextricable from its preeminent technologies of knowledge. Moreover, the concept of race provides an essential pivot in the construction of such power.

### The Human Genome Project

The Human Genome Project (HGP) has been a central force in contemporary biopolitics and marks the turn to genomics in molecular science. The goal of the HGP was to assemble the sequence of a single set of human chromosomes. By design, this sequence would not represent all human DNA in existence, but a sample of the DNA that *one* human passes on to or receives from his or her kin. HGP scientists needed an endlessly reproducible set of DNA to sample from, so they used immortalized cell lines already created from populations living in Utah, France, and Venezuela (called CEPH for the institute that houses them). Evolutionary biologist Ernst Mayer recalls that while other *methods* were considered, HGP planners did not address the *identity* of whom they would sample from. The race and ethnicity of the individuals who donated their DNA was not at issue in the early stages of the HGP and the idea of global population representation was not discussed (Jackson, 1998: 157). Likewise, there were no measures for minority inclusion or minority community intervention on the table.

The absence of any formal dialogue over race, ethnicity, and population representation is evident in the HGP's first and second Five Year Plans. Early on, the HGP established a branch entitled "Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications" (ELSI) to address issues arising from new knowledge about human biology and the circulation of personal genetic information. ELSI's goals in the first Five Year Plan did not address issues of population representation, nor did they ask how social groups will be affected by HGP knowledge. They focused on potential harm to the individual, such as individual privacy, confidentiality, potential discrimination by insurers or employers, and dealing with personal risk and discrimination (NIH, 1990). In the second Five Year Plan, an even more vague list of concerns was offered:

- (i) Continue to identify and define [ELSI] issues and develop policy options to address them.
- (ii) Develop and disseminate policy options regarding genetic testing services with potential widespread use.
- (iii) Foster greater acceptance of human genetic variation.
- (iv) Enhance and expand public and professional education that is sensitive to sociocultural and psychological issues. (Collins and Galas, 1993: 46)

The last two goals mentioning “acceptance of variation” and “social sensitivity” suggested a potential space for dialogue about the significance of race and the impact the HGP will have on popular notions, but there was still no explicit mention of race, ethnicity, or population representation.

Proceedings show that despite the inclusion of a diverse array of scientists, social scientists, ethicists, government officials, and community members, the concepts of inclusion and difference underpinning HGP sampling efforts were rarely addressed. Thus, the HGP proceeded without criticism to: 1) use samples already accessible without concern for global population representation, 2) order the removal of all population labels from the DNA to be sequenced, and 3) pool unlabeled samples for DNA amplification.

### **The Human Genome Diversity Project**

Though the HGP advanced with a clear “no-labels, representation-neutral” policy, the U.S. government of the early 1990s was headed in a different direction. In 1990, the HHS released Healthy People 2000, a set of national health goals wherein race and ethnicity were to be of primary interest. Healthy People 2000, the second decade-spanning national health agenda following Surgeon General Julius B. Richmond’s 1979 report, joined the U.S. Public Health services and the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of the Sciences with over “300 membership organizations representing professional, voluntary, and private sectors as well as 54 State and territorial health departments” (HHS, 1994). For its midway review, Healthy People 2000 set three broad goals for the remaining part of the decade: to “increase the span of healthy life for Americans,” “reduce health disparities among Americans,” and “achieve access to preventive services for all Americans” (HHS, 1994).

Contributors to the agenda stressed that an expansion of national health statistics on “non-Black” and “non-White” groups were needed (*Healthy People 2000: Citizens Chart the Course*, 1990: 51). The expansion of such databases relied on the implementation of socially-defined race and ethnicity categories as mandated by the Office of Management and Budget’s Directive No. 15.<sup>1</sup> This focus on racial and ethnic health

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<sup>1</sup> The OMB states: “These classifications should not be interpreted as being scientific or anthropological in nature, nor should they be viewed as determinants of eligibility for participation in any Federal program. They have been developed in response to needs expressed by both the executive branch and the Congress to

disparities was absent from the first Healthy People report, but soon became the focus of Healthy People campaigns. By 1998, a minimum template for population-based objectives was adopted to enforce the use of OMB categories.

Parallel to these efforts, the NIH passed the Revitalization Act, a statute setting guidelines for the inclusion and surveillance of women and minorities in clinical research and clinical trials (NIH, 1993). Investigators were directed to publish how their research would affect women and minorities and to generate “outreach programs” to ensure inclusion (NIH, 1994). Cost could not be a contributing factor to the decision over whom to include in a study. Exclusion was only permissible if the variables studied could be proven to have no differential effect on populations.

Informal communications regarding the possibility of an auxiliary human genome project began in 1989 and, by 1992, the NIH, the Department of Energy, and the National Science Foundation funded three planning workshops. In these planning stages, both the National Human Genome Research Center and the Human Genome Organization (the international coordinating body of the HGP) voiced interest in securing future funds for the project. Human Genome Organization president Sir Walter Bodmer went so far as to call the Diversity Project “a cultural obligation of the [human] genome project” (Roberts, 1991: 1615).

The idea of a globally representative genome project came from several highly reputable molecular anthropologists and population geneticists. Yet, the two founders of the project, U.C. Berkeley biochemist Allan Wilson and Stanford geneticist Luca Cavalli-Sforza, had very different strategies for obtaining representation. Wilson was in favor of grid-sampling the globe: ignoring previous notions of relatedness and using geographical distance to mark biodiversity. Cavalli-Sforza argued that grid-sampling was too expensive and risky, and that researchers would have to pay mind to predefined populations (those marked by ethnic or linguistic ties) so as to have a rough guide to reproductive isolation. In the end, planners agreed to collect immortalized cell lines from 400 predefined populations, while loosely distance-sampling non-immortalized

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provide for the collection and use of compatible, nonduplicated, exchangeable racial and ethnic data by Federal agencies” (1977). The race categories in effect at this time were: White, Black, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, with Hispanic as an ethnic category.

DNA (Roberts, 1992: 1205). Thus, pre-defined social categories of *ethnicity* were to be the precursor to this genomic investigation.

While the Diversity Project promised many of the same things as the HGP—a greater understanding of biology, knowledge about the role of genetics in disease, and a forum for international scientific collaboration—it also marketed itself on its ability to address *deeper social issues*. Planners openly took issue with the no-labels approach of the HGP and linked it to ethical and cultural insensitivity and Eurocentrism. Wilson and Cavalli-Sforza both remarked that the HGP’s reliance on CEPH cell lines would result in a “Caucasian” or Caucasoid” sequence (Roberts, 1991: 1204; Bowcock and Cavalli-Sforza, 1991: 491). The Diversity Project, in contrast, offered a globally representative approach based on an incorporation of the self-determined identities of ethnic tribes. They planned to sample isolated populations across the world starting with those considered threatened with extinction.

As the Diversity Project met with suspicion from the public and indigenous groups around the world, their claim to alleviate racism grew into a clamor. By 1994, in a presentation to UNESCO, Cavalli-Sforza devoted one-fourth of his speech to discussing “how the Project will help combat the scourge of racism” (Human Genome Diversity Project, 1994). Although they eventually reassessed their isolate-based sampling protocol and opened the project to U.S. racial minorities and any groups who wanted to participate, their initial stance alienated government and indigenous groups alike. For the U.S. federal government, the Diversity Project’s focus on tribal ethnicity foreclosed investigation into minority biostatistics. The HHS could not accommodate an ethnic enumeration system separate from OMB. For indigenous groups, sampling was seen as a taking with little promise of return.<sup>2</sup> Indigenous groups all around the world signed petitions and made declarations of their unwillingness to participate in what became known as another instance of “biopiracy” and “modern-day colonialism” (Dickinson, 1996: 14). After three years of indigenous lobbying against the project, despite the production of a

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<sup>2</sup> In *Race to the Finish: Identity and Governance in an Age of Genomics*, Jenny Reardon explores the eventual failure of the project in terms of this rise of indigenous resistance. She argues that the HGDP’s refusal to face the history of race relations between Anglo-American academics and indigenous subjects prevented them from seeing their project as implicated in that history. Thus, in addition to the *kind* of inclusion promoted, inclusion itself served as an important biopolitical impasse.

revised sampling protocol based on tribal consent, the Diversity Project's major funding sources withdrew support.

### **The Polymorphism Discovery Resource**

Amidst these decisions, in 1997, the National Human Genome Research Center was elevated to the status of an institute of the NIH. As an institute, this department was invested with a new scientific leadership role and a more robust governing role. The new institute immediately moved to create a genome project that would solve the problems that plagued the Diversity Project and expand the limits of the HGP. The Polymorphism Discovery Resource was launched in 1998 as the official auxiliary to the Human Genome Project, dedicated to providing a global representation of genomic polymorphisms. In collaboration with the other HHS and NIH facilities, it aggressively sought to include DNA from people with non-European heritage. Still, once collected, DNA was de-labeled and pooled as before.

Discovery Resource planners solved the question of how to obtain global representation by designing a sampling protocol around the racial categories of the OMB Directive No. 15. Unlike the Diversity Project, this research arm of the federal government did not have to validate its use of U.S. racial categories to comprehensively and biologically "reflect the diversity of the human population" in order to get funding (DOE, 1999). Still, planners adopted a similar antiracism, pro-inclusion argument to popularize the project. They proffered: "publicly available DNA collections contain little African material; Native American and Asian contributions are similarly scant. As a result, say NHGRI staffers, it will be essential to collect DNA from a racially structured set of donors. Once the DNA has been sampled, however, all personal and racial data will have to be removed to protect privacy – diminishing the scientific value of the project, but bolstering its ethical foundation" (Marshall, 1997: 2047). The institute combined social inclusion and scientific representation into one method. This set a sampling precedent for future genomic research. Considering pre-defined race was incorporated as the first step in genomic sampling.

### **The International HapMap Project**

In the late 1990s, competitive pressure from a private project and the need for the new Institute to maintain its momentum forced the National Human

Genome Research Institute and the Human Genome Organization to wrap up its projects and plan the next step. In “New Goals for the U.S. Human Genome Project: 1998-2003,” human variation took center stage. Under “Goal 3: Human Genome Sequence Variation,” we see a first elaboration of 1) what was meant by “population,” 2) the significance of measuring frequencies between individuals and populations, and 3) why population genetics would be an integral method to genomic research. Yet, the crux of the project’s position on race and ethnicity came under the heading of ELSI goals. “Goal E” promised to “Explore how socioeconomic factors and concepts of race and ethnicity influence the use, understanding, and interpretation of genetic information, the utilization of genetic services, and the development of policy” (Collins et al. 1998: 688). In 1999, ELSI announced a Request for Applications entitled “Concepts of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture: Examination of the ways in which the discovery of DNA polymorphisms may interact with current concepts of race, ethnicity and culture.” For the first time, scientists questioned how their research was going to effect racial and ethnic categories already in place. Behind closed doors, the National Human Genome Research Institute’s National Advisory Council also began discussing the conceptual structure of race and ethnicity, while the institute began reworking its minority inclusion policy.

Likewise, the Food and Drug Administration issued a policy referred to as the Demographic Rule. It explicitly linked the issue of minority inclusion to biological processes. It warned (1) Different subgroups of the population may respond differently to a specific drug product and (2) although the effort should be made to look for differences in effectiveness and adverse reactions among such subgroups, that effort is not being made consistently (FDA, 1998). When the NIH drafted its new policy, one that has stood since 2001, it almost point by point reflected this combined social and biological rationale (NIH, 2000).

This new orientation has been sedimented and expanded in this century’s projects. While the Polymorphism Discovery Resource was the first genome project dedicated to collecting DNA to study polymorphisms, it was soon eclipsed by a *labels-on* polymorphism mapping project comprised of thirteen major pharmaceutical, genomics, and informatics companies and the HGP’s British supporter, the Wellcome Trust. The SNP Consortium, founded in April 1999, aimed to generate a map of 300,000 evenly spaced single nucleotide polymorphisms (.001% of the variation in the human genome) (<http://www.ornl.gov/sci/techresources/Human>

Genome/faq/snps.shtml#snps). In July 2000, the National Human Genome Research Institute donated 24 Discovery Resource samples hailed as “representing several racial groups,” and provided database and storage infrastructure to promote the generation of 250,000 additional polymorphisms (DOE, 2000). Within months, the SNP Consortium produced a map detailing over one million polymorphisms (International SNP Map Working Group, 2001).

In August 2001, the National Human Genome Research Institute announced its plan to expand the Human Genome Project and the SNP Consortium into a genome-wide haplotype mapping project (Pennisi, 2001). The International HapMap Project was formally launched in November 2002, following a study performed on Diversity Project cell lines which suggested that there was, in fact, continental structure to the genome and an article favoring a biological concept of race.

At this time, the federal government tightened its policies on inclusion and representation around the world. The FDA circulated the draft “Guidance for Industry: Collection of Race and Ethnicity Data in Clinical Trials” (FDA, 2003) as a direct response to the foreign relocation of randomized pharmaceutical trials. The FDA sought to curb wanton incorporation of foreign-based data without consideration of its consequences for domestic “population control” measures like racial enumeration by OMB standards. Aware of the practical limitations of foreign-based research, the FDA stipulated that researchers could research sub-racial ethnic groups and tribes as long as they reported those groups in terms of OMB races (HHS, 2005). Thus, the U.S. global research orientation established by the NIH and FDA crystallized into a concerted policy wherein all globally designed research would filter through a system of categories pertinent to the U.S. sociopolitical context.

In the end, HapMap planners designed an OMB-friendly *continent-based* approach wherein they would sample one well-defined ethnic group from each region of the globe and refer to samples in geographic terms.<sup>3</sup> This original proposition was altered when Native American groups opted out of the project. The tribal representatives that were contacted requested that HapMap not knowingly include any Native American samples. It was

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<sup>3</sup> Troy Duster has written extensively on the reification of racial categories since the Human Genome Project. Regarding the HapMap project’s continental scheme, he asks: “Why was the question [of variation] raised in this manner?” (Duster, 2005: 1050). See Duster 2005 and 2006.

altered a second time as representatives from China and Japan both expressed their intent on participating. Both China and Japan were included, yet their sample contributions were each halved. Thus, the HapMap's Phase I DNA pool represents a sample of equal European, African, and Asian proportions. While these limited groupings overlap with OMB standards, they are not completely coincident. They provide a first glimpse of a move away from strict adherence to Directive No. 15.

It is important to note that many HapMap scientists questioned the implementation of OMB categories from the outset. Planners wanted the project to be a beacon guiding the world toward a more just existence based on the evident truths of our biology, not a hegemonic reflex of one nation's population standards. Therefore, once the planning group took on the status of an official consortium, the HapMap Project decided to avoid suggesting comprehensive global representation would be achieved. Instead, they generated a set of "Guidelines for Referring to the HapMap Populations in Publications and Presentations" that instruct all users of HapMap data to adhere to the immediate geographic, location-specific descriptors they provide (this consists of a town, city or ethnic label accompanied by the state or nation where that sample was collected). The guidelines reason that rules must be followed in order to assure scientific consistency, but also to show respect for the communities sampled. "Guidelines" makes clear that labels are generated to reflect exactly where samples were obtained; therefore using a continental shorthand is impermissible (<http://www.hapmap.org/citinghapmap.html>).

However, slippages have proved impossible to avoid. In the HapMap Project's official introductory article in *Nature*, the consortium justified their sampling in terms of its ability to engender global representation based on continental ancestry. The consortium called the Yoruba in Ibadan, Nigeria; Japanese in Tokyo, Japan; Han Chinese in Beijing, China; and CEPH "four large populations [that] will include a substantial amount of the genetic variation found in all populations throughout the world" (The International HapMap Consortium, 2003: 791).

Thus, despite HapMap's attempts to disentangle its practices of social inclusion, scientific representation, and taxonomy, its continental focus has precipitated the current sampling paradigm that divides the globe into genomic regions coincident with OMB standards. Again, this paradigm not only guides the scientific elaboration of research populations but



provides the social, political, and ethical justification for the genomic research itself.

## Conclusion

This portrayal of the major genome projects of the genome era shows that while each of them faced innumerable challenges, in the end, none could survive without engaging with the U.S. federal interest in race. The HapMap is clearly moving things in a new direction with the disavowal of overt OMB categories, but its continental ancestry protocol keeps the population framework squarely located in the government's "population control" scheme. To return to Foucault's notion of biopower, genome projects are successful insofar as they are relevant to larger sociopolitical projects useful in the administration of life. Race provides an invaluable tool for organizing populations as well as scientific knowledge about those populations.

This portrayal also shows how critical ethical appeals are in garnering support for biopolitical projects. From the outset, projects made communication with the public first on their agenda. They articulated their strategies in the language of promises for a better social future and the personal relevance of scientific policies to all citizens of the world. Projects that previously ignored race were forced to align ethical visions with the dominant social concerns of the U.S. context, making racial strategy and dialogue a priority.

Rose gives this shift toward "attempts to shape the conduct of human beings by acting upon their sentiments, beliefs, values" the name "ethopolitics."

If "discipline" individualizes and normalizes, and "biopolitics" collectivizes and socializes, "ethopolitics" concerns itself with the self-techniques by which human beings should judge and act upon themselves to make themselves better than they are. (Rose, 2007: 27)

While Rose urges us to see contemporary race in terms of the latter forms of politics, my analysis indicates that, indeed, all of these forms of power co-exist today. Sampling strategies must be subjectively relevant, biosocially relevant *and* governmentally relevant in order to succeed. Furthermore, as Epstein (2007) and this research cogently show, government racial policies and genomic power/knowledge continue to normalize and individualize in important ways.

Still, Rose points to an important aspect of contemporary biopower that must be further addressed: the apparatus of state racism in the new genomic era. Foucault's articulation of racism in terms of eugenics and Nazi *Rassenhygiene* has limited relevance today, as the subject's relation to science and the state changes. Moreover, the relationship between global projects and the U.S. government, and between large-scale biology and the state, indicate that structures of governmentality are rapidly transforming. It remains to be seen how global biomedical development will affect domestic race policies. Finally, we must watch as genomics moves from a populations framework to individualized medicine. Will OMB continue to play a role in this new science of the self?

As of today, there are five new international human genome projects underway and many corollary projects being devised. Genomics continues to gain ground in the biological sciences across the world. My investigation shows that the links between state notions of race, ethical envisionings, and genomic practice are critical aspects of the evolution of biopower in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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# INFO-WAR AS THE INTERFACE OF BIOPOLITICS: RE-READING FOUCAULT WITH VIRILIO

SAM HAN

## Introduction

Among the collections of lectures at the College de France, *Society Must Be Defended* stands out as Foucault's most forthright critical encounter with theories of war and racism. In it, he develops concepts that are highly influential to contemporary Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, one of the most widely read theorists of recent years, who elaborates Foucault's "biopolitics" in his treatment of the "War on Terror," among other things. The state of exception, Agamben's most oft-cited formulation, is influenced directly by Foucault's overturning of Clausewitz's original dictum "But, after all, war is no more than a continuation of politics" to: "Politics is the continuation of war by other means." Certainly, the crux of Foucault's argument in *Society*, Agamben rightly highlights, is that the function of sovereign power is to "make live and let die." In other words, the Sovereign is not simply a politico-theological entity that represents the polity (a power ordained from On High) but that which is able to govern at the level of "life-itself" (Agamben 2005). This moment, when power begins to operate at the level of life and death, is what Foucault famously dubbed the "biopolitical."

However, what he, and others who have followed him, leaves room for is an analysis of what Foucault in *Society Must Be Defended* calls the "technologies of warfare" that form the technological "ground" or basis upon which biopolitics can take shape and exist. The purpose of this chapter is to develop Foucault's analysis of the machinery or technologies of warfare by juxtaposing his work to that of the theorist of technology and speed, Paul Virilio. Foucault's later work has been taken in quite a few different directions in recent years. In my estimation, one of the most interesting has been the connection of Foucault's work on war with what

he calls “state racism,” which has been wonderfully elaborated by Achille Mbembe (Mbembe 2003). Yet, very few have suggested a convergence of Foucault’s work, early or late, with the thought of Virilio, save for a few authors who are mostly Virilio scholars like John Armitage and Steve Redhead, but also Julian Reid (See Armitage 1999, Redhead 2004 and Reid 2003). This is most prescient, I will argue, given the context of Virilio’s work on actual military technologies, such as satellite imagery, missile-defense and global positioning systems. In works such as *War and Cinema* (1989), *Pure War* (1997), *Open Sky* (1997) and *The Strategy of Deception* (2000), among many others, he provides a useful perspective on military technology that compliments Foucault’s, principally because he too focuses on a shift from the Clausewitzian definition of war.

Yet, for Virilio, the shift comes from the centrality of speed in contemporary war strategy, which he identifies as emerging with what he refers to as “human rights wars,” pointing specifically to the military interventions in Kosovo. In such a situation, the strategy of pre-emptive offense overrides the strategy of defensive control in the name of human *life* or “humanity,” which Virilio aptly names “the integral accident.” Intervention no longer comes from without (as in a military attack) but from within. Again, few have made note of the similarities of this view with Foucault’s argument that the new technology of biopower is addressed to “man-as-living-being” as opposed to “man-as-body,” in that it multiplies a body to populations “as a political problem . . . that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power’s problem.” Hence, we see the State, in many instances (in Europe in particular), acting as the guarantor of health only to institute the panoptical *dispositif* of discipline, as Foucault chronicles famously in *Discipline and Punish*. In picking up these themes from *Discipline*, Foucault argues in *Society* that this technique of power is politics—in other words, war, and that it is immanent to the State.

It is on this point that I suggest a reading of Virilio alongside Foucault is of unique importance. If the wisdom gained from Foucault’s interpretation of these classical thinkers can speak to our contemporary political moment, there needs to be a reckoning with the technological and political changes that have occurred, not only since the time of Hobbes, Boulainvilliers and Clausewitz (whom Foucault exhaustively interprets), but even since the lectures which Foucault delivered in the late-1970s. If war by other means is indeed biopolitics, as Foucault claims, biopolitics must surely look and feel differently now than it did in the past as the



technologies and technics of warfare have changed drastically. It is the aim of this chapter to draw out the implications of such changes in military techniques and technologies for the understanding of biopolitics today.

## War and Biopolitics

As I trust that many of my colleagues in this volume will have covered “biopolitics” as found in Foucault’s works, I will begin with a brief exposition of the relationship of war and biopolitics as found in *Society Must be Defended*, beginning with his engagement with Hobbes, Boulainvilliers and Clausewitz.

In his reading of these classical thinkers of war, Foucault jettisons the notion that “civil peace” is the equilbrial operating *status quo* of the State in favor of viewing war as its *central* facet, a point that is drawn, as I alluded to earlier, from the classical theories of Hobbes, Boulainvilliers and Clausewitz. “It is not just *a* war that we find behind order, behind peace, and beneath the law. It is not *a* war that presides over the birth of the great automaton which constitutes the State, the sovereign, or Leviathan.” We are not at war as opposed to peace, but we are in what Hobbes specifically calls a “state of war” (Foucault 2003, 92), a phrase which Foucault could have easily amended to “State *of* war,” that is to say, war is the normative state of all States. “War,” writes Foucault, “is the motor behind institutions and order. In the smallest of its cogs, peace is waging a secret war. To put it another way, we have to interpret the war that is going on beneath peace; peace itself is a *coded* war” (Foucault 2003, 50).<sup>1</sup>

Such changes in the relations between war, the State and politics introduces a fascinating problematic to Foucault’s master concepts—biopolitics and biopower. The moment of biopower, as Foucault readily notes, is the moment when populations become the problem for power. In other words, the biopolitical moment is that which war becomes coded, not as a generalized subjectivity framed within the binary terms of Us-versus-Them, but coded in terms of population.

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<sup>1</sup> It is this proto-digital language of Foucault (“code”) that I find to be fascinating and significant for a comparison with Virilio, who confronts technologies, especially digital technologies, in a far more specific and rigorous way.

As he argues, the State production of biopolitical knowledge is centered on “a set of processes such as the ratio of births to deaths, the rate of reproduction, the fertility of a population, and so on. It is at any rate at this moment that the first demographers begin to measure these phenomena in statistical terms” (Foucault 2003, 243). Hence, the techniques of warfare in biopolitics are at once statistical and demographic. The significance of statistical and demographic knowledge is no clearer than in one of the central themes recurring throughout the lectures comprising *Society Must Be Defended*, which is racism, and in particular that racism he dubs “State racism,” an example of which is Nazism.

Though anti-Semitism has, as Jean-Paul Sartre has written in *The Anti-Semite and the Jew* ([1946] 1948) long been embedded in the political history of European states it was during the events of the Holocaust that it displayed a distinctive type of biopolitical rubric or code. In one sense, anti-Semitism constitutes a tradition: it is based in older forms of racism rooted in individual prejudice facilitated by “the stereotype” or “racial myth.” However, as Zygmunt Bauman argues in his landmark study *Modernity and the Holocaust* (2000), anti-Semitism was not solely the result of an entire nation of people coming together based on a singular stereotype of a religio-racial Other, but something quite different. Whereas Bauman in his book refutes the liberal (Habermasian) argument that the Holocaust was a distortion of the values of modernity, Foucault focuses his attention elsewhere—towards the specific *types* of knowledge produced in conjunction with State racism, namely statistical and demographic knowledge. As he details, the implementation of Nazi science and demography, and in particular the use of the Hollerith Electrical Tabulation System (which Foucault does not discuss by name) by the Third Reich,<sup>2</sup> is demonstrative of the biopolitically coded war that was launched in Europe during those years. Moreover, the Holocaust can be viewed as “war” *par excellence* as it did not pertain to the traditional understandings of a battle between states but within one, against an “internal” population perceived as “social problem.”

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<sup>2</sup> See Gotz Aly and Karl Roth. The Hollerith Electrical Tabulation System facilitated the first automated census in the United States. It was first used in the 1890 census which was completed in a matter of months. To show how painstaking the work had been prior to Hollerith’s system, the previous census (of 1880) could not be completed as the project ran out of money. In other words, by 1890, when it was time for the next census, it had not even been completed. In fact, Alex Galloway argues in Protocol that the birth of biopolitics in the US was the census of 1890. See Galloway.

## Biopolitics as a condition for info war

I will now turn to aspects of the work of Paul Virilio that pertain to techniques of warfare in the late-20<sup>th</sup> and early-21<sup>st</sup> centuries. We will begin with a few of Virilio's more general concepts regarding military technologies since they are essential to understanding of his more precise concept of *info war*. In several of his works, but especially *War and Cinema*, he argues that there is a *new level of immediacy* in military engagements, constituting "a cinematic artifice" in the post-WWII era. The prehistory of this cinematic artifice begins with the optical telegraph, which is first developed in 1794. "Since then," Virilio writes,

geographical space has been shrinking with every advance in speed, and strategic location has lost importance as ballistic systems have become more widespread and sophisticated, [carrying] us into a realm of factious topology in which all the surfaces of the globe are directly present to one another. (Virilio 2004, 102)

In addition to the optical telegraph, European colonialism had similar effects on geographical space, creating what he refers to as an "endogenous world," resulting from a technical "trinketization." In effect, "it was no longer necessary for people to travel to distant lands; the faraway could be presented to them as such, on the spot, in the form of more or less obsolescent *scale models* (Ibid.), which are important because it is very much within the regime of representation that Foucault outlined for us earlier, with regard to statistical databasing and demographic organization of populations.

These two aspects of military technology comprise what Virilio refers to as the "war machine." It is worth noting that this is the same language of Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) but it is uncertain who is referring to whom in this case. Nevertheless, Virilio's war machine is *cinematic*, whereas for Deleuze and Guattari's it is abstract, and virtual.<sup>3</sup> To be more precise, the Virilian war machine swallows the human sensorium into its own cinematic logic of vision, thus creating an artifice,

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<sup>3</sup> What marks the crucial difference between the two war machines is the difference in the status of code in each. Code, when utilized by Deleuze and Guattari, refers to a state of centralization and territorialization. Cinema, as Deleuze would suggest, is a coded medium, as it requires a territorialization of communication pathways, thus Virilio's cinematic war machine is coded visually. For Deleuze and Guattari, the war machine is not necessarily a singular medium, but a multiplicity that is able to actualize into various media.

or what Baudrillard would consider “simulacra” of war through moving images. Virilio cites, as illustrations, the increase of war museums and war simulators after WWII. These literal war machines allowed the viewing public to feel at once spectators but *also* survivors. However, the cost of such trinketization, Virilio argues, in a rather McLuhanian manner, is that the human senses become substituted for devices, concluding that the simulation becomes a substitute, culminating in the “interception of sight by the sighting device” (Virilio 2004, 102).

Lastly, and most significant in understanding him alongside Foucault, Virilio also studies the changes in the uses of military technology, which today constitutes what he considers “info war,” which he most robustly details *Strategy of Deception* (2000). Though previous works focused on themes of scale and vision such as “trinketization” and cinema just mentioned above, *Strategy* takes on a concept that which Virilio calls “total war” (Virilio and Armitage 2000).

Though *Strategy* is an extended essay on the wars in the Balkans of the 1990s, the most important arguments of the book are not about Kosovar politics. Rather, it is his identification of Kosovo as a transformative moment in the history of military technologies and in the discourse of war-waging since Kosovo was imbued with rhetoric of human rights and a recapitulation of “just war” theory.<sup>4</sup> Virilio’s claim that the wars in the Balkans of the 1990s signaled a new type of war is far from an original formulation but, importantly, one which he derives from the rhetoric of early supporters of the military intervention like former British PM Tony Blair: “this is a new kind of war, about values as much as territory.” As Virilio puts it, the war was being sold to the world as not being geopolitically-motivated but as a moral response driven by the dire situation of human rights in the region, namely genocide or “ethnic cleansing,” a word spawned from that conflict that has maintained until this day. Yet, what is interesting about the heralding of a new era of war was not simply the liberal justification (or reasons) of going to war but the actual *techniques* of war, which served as the proof for the pudding for supporters of the new “humanitarian” war. However, as Virilio writes, the “massive use of high technology, though purportedly employed to causing ‘collateral’ damage, would not prevent the Commander-in-Chief

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<sup>4</sup> For discussion of “just war,” see Walzer, Michael. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*. Basic Books, 2000, which various scholars have labeled the *locus classicus*.

apologizing shortly afterwards for a number of ‘regrettable incidents’, such as the bombing of refugee columns” (Virilio 2000, 2).

I will now turn to the matter of “info war” beginning with some of the technological conditions that form the ground of info war.

Virilio offers three main technological conditions: (1) the permanent presence of satellites over territories (2) the real-time transmission of information gathered (3) ability to perform rapid analysis of the data transmitted to the various general staffs (Virilio 2000, 18). In this list, he gives much more weight to the satellite than the others because of its importance as facilitator of other, interoperable technologies to function using its technology (much like the Internet in its “openness”). One such “parasitic” (Michel Serres) technology,<sup>5</sup> which feeds off the information from other technologies, in this instance the satellite, is the global positioning system (GPS) in addition to other military technologies such as manned and automatic air reconnaissance drones.

As we have already encountered in Foucault, these techniques of war always in resonance with those of the State. But today, in our globalized world, we no longer have a singular Eye of the State or the Sovereign in the Hobbesian sense, although many scholars of surveillance, misusing Foucault, would suggest that satellite technologies heighten the panoptic quality of everyday life. To the contrary, the war machine for Virilio stands, not as the Panopticon, but as “the eye of Humanity skimming over the oceans and continents in search of criminals” (Virilio 2000, 21-22). By this, not only is Virilio suggesting that the ethical dimension of “the global information dominance programme” is visualized through a technological *dispositif*, but that it is, more pointedly, *theologized*. The visual war machine, Virilio argues, can thus be thought of as “the divine, opening up the possibility of ethical cleansings, which now seem set fair to replace the ethnic cleansing of undesirable or supernumerary *populations*” (Virilio 2000, 22). It is with this detail—that the visual war machine is able parse through populations, not necessarily individuals—that we see one point of intersection between Foucault and Virilio. Just as Foucault maintains in *Discipline and Punish* regarding the process in which human (individualized) subjects in the Panopticon become (impersonal) “disciplined bodies,” effectively forming a population, Virilio likewise suggests that the war machine works at the level of populations,

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<sup>5</sup> See Serres, Michel. *The Parasite*. University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

inaugurating a new scale of warfare. Even phrases such as the extinct “hand to hand combat” connote the differences in scale, and implicitly technics, that info war brings. But crucially for Virilio, the theological metaphor has less to do with “the divine” as such but with the dispersal of the war into all social forms, including life itself. Info war, as Virilio notes, “has nothing to do with the destruction brought about by bombs and grenades and so on. It is specifically linked to the information systems of life itself.” (Virilio and Armitage, 2000)

Though on this point—regarding biopolitics and life itself—Foucault and Virilio mesh quite well, it is Foucault’s conceptualization of race in biopolitics, mentioned earlier, that we find a greater need for Virilio. We have already covered the *kind* of racism that Foucault believes “State racism” to be— the production of populations open to intervention of all sorts by the State. But to this one must demand to know more deeply how these *techniques* function within a state of total info war. For Foucault, the eternal war of the State always entails a process of racialization but one which undermines the understanding of the “race war” maintained by the classical thinkers of war that Foucault works through in *Society*:

The war that is going on beneath order and peace, the war that undermines our society and divides it in a binary mode is, basically, a race war. At a very early stage, we find the basic elements that make the war possible, and then ensure its continuation, pursuit, and development: ethnic differences, differences between languages, different degrees of force, vigor, energy, and violence; the difference between savagery and barbarism; the conquest and subjugation of one race by another. (Foucault 2003, 59-60)

But, as he points out, the key aspect of biopolitical racism consists of the fact that:

...the other race is basically not the race that came from elsewhere [as in the case of the word “barbarian”] or that was, for a time, triumphant and dominant, but that it is a race that is permanently, ceaselessly infiltrating the social body, or which is, rather, constantly being re-created in and by the social fabric. In other words, what we see as a polarity, as a binary rift within society, is not a clash between two distinct races. It is the splitting of a single race into a superrace and a subrace. To put it a different way, it is the reappearance, within a single race, of the past of that race. (Foucault 2003, 60-61)

Thus, for Foucault, the process of racialization does not create an opposition between two races but in fact creates a situation for constant

war within a singular race, albeit one that results in a binary rift. Nevertheless, this type of radical inclusion is akin to Virilio's notion of globalitarianism, except for the fact that for Virilio the "within" happens to be the technologically globalized worlds. "Sovereignty," Virilio argues, "no longer resides in the territory itself, but in the control of the territory" (Virilio and Armitage, 2000). As mentioned earlier, satellites are genuine weapons in information war, and this allows for a rather interesting strategy of offense. It does not mean invasion through direct mass extermination of civilian populations but rather the permanent development of a global arsenal (Virilio 2000, 44) and thus condition of "total war" or more aptly *virtual* war, that is, in a Foucaultian vein, the *normalization* of military technologies in everyday life. This was of course the status quo during the long period of the Cold War, out of which Kosovar conflict can be said to be a result.

Virilio contends that the Kosovar wars laid bare this type of interventionism in geo-politics. Hence they are demonstrative of a new, globalitarian scale of total war, within which info war is situated as an integrated, "globally constituted accident." To this, he draws an analogy to the concept of systemic risk, which in the language of high finance is a risk that is not only internal to the operation of the system but vital to it. If investors and traders do not take risks, they are, in effect, hurting the financial system at large. Advances in military technology have allowed for war to be automated and thus integrated into everyday operations of geopolitics. This was of course the argument presented in Virilio's earlier works especially *Bunker Archaeology* (1997), in which he argues that post-war architecture throughout Europe had become a "city" of old, techno-architecturally equipped for war.

This is no more nicely demonstrated than the situation of nuclear proliferation and military intensification, which have become integral parts of any efforts of diplomacy. Hence, globalitarianism signals the onset of a meta-geophysical age characteristic of what we have now called "globalization" in which info war plays a significant part in changing the dynamics of sovereign power.

For want of being able to abolish the bomb, we have decided, then, to abolish the state, a nation state which is now charged with 'sovereignist' vices and all 'nationalist' crimes, thereby exonerating a military-industrial and scientific complex which has spent a whole century innovating in horror and accumulating the most terrifying weapons—from asphyxiating gases and bacteriological weapons to the thermonuclear device, not to

mention the future ravages of the information bomb or of a genetic bomb that will be capable not merely of abolishing the nation state, but the people, the population, by the 'genomic' modification of the human race. (Virilio 2000, 57-58)

Clearly evoking the language reminiscent of Foucault, Virilio argues that info war has made for biopolitics to explode beyond "population control" but to virtual population annihilation.

Biopolitics is the condition of possibility for info-war.

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## **SECTION IX:**

### **CONSUMPTION AS WAY OF LIFE**

ALIMENTARY ETHICS IN THE HISTORY  
OF SEXUALITY AND NBC'S  
*THE BIGGEST LOSER*

S. MARGOT FINN

Foods, wines, and relations with women and boys constituted analogous ethical material; they brought forces into play that were natural, but that always tended to be excessive; and they all raised the same question: how could one, how must one “make use” (chrēsthai) of this dynamics of pleasures, desires, and acts? A question of right use. As Aristotle expresses it, “all men enjoy in some way or another both savoury foods and sexual intercourse, but not all men do so as they ought [ouch' hōs dei] —Foucault 1990b: 51-2.

**Abstract**

The second two volumes of the *History of Sexuality* repeatedly gesture towards the importance of alimentary ethics in ancient Greek and early Christian writings. Implicit and explicit rules and regulations and judgments about eating and body size are also fundamental to the narrative structure and mass appeal of cultural texts like the NBC television show *The Biggest Loser*. Moralizing about food and fatness in both Foucault's source material and contemporary reality television challenges the special status Foucault claims for sexuality in the constitution of the ethical self. Although Foucault remains narrowly focused on sexual pleasure in the *History*, he offers a productive model for examining the moral use of the bodily pleasures of food and drink.

**I. An incomplete shift from “sexuality” to desire**

In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault claims that the experience of sexuality *qua* sexuality—or individuals' recognition of themselves as *subjects* of a sexuality—is a modern phenomenon. Volume I

chronicles the emergence and institutionalization of that particular way of assigning meaning to sexual acts, desires, and sensations in Western industrial societies beginning in the eighteenth-century. The project he outlines for the subsequent volumes promises to further develop the history of sexuality and its correlation with certain fields of knowledge, rules and norms, and forms of subjectivity. In his chapter “Periodization,” he claims that the technologies of repression began to take shape in the sixteenth century with the Reformation and Tridentine Catholicism, and their penetration of the laity coincided with the consolidation of the bourgeois family “sometime around the eighteen-thirties” (Foucault 1990a: 122).

Six years later when he finally published the second volume of the *History*, the project had taken a significant leap back in time to the fourth century B.C. The reason for the shift, he explained, was recognition that the modern “sexuality” was part of a longer history of individuals recognizing themselves as desiring subjects. In the introduction to *The Use of Pleasure*, he says:

One could not very well analyze the formation and development of the experience of sexuality from the eighteenth century onward, without doing a historical and critical study dealing with desire and the desiring subject (Foucault 1990b: 5).

*Volume II: The Use of Pleasure* traces the desiring subject back to classical Greek antiquity. It reads like an inverse of volume one. Whereas the first volume posited that the Victorian Era, popularly remembered as a period of intense sexual repression and silencing, actually witnessed an explosive proliferation of discourse about and concern with sexuality, Foucault suggests in volume two that the ancient Greeks, popularly remembered as pagan hedonists who exulted in sodomy and pederasty, instead glorified self-restraint and moderation.

Nevertheless, Foucault's use of the classical Greek and early Christian practical texts is fundamentally structured by his project's initial focus on the acts, desires, and sensations that later became part of “sexuality.” He is, from the outset, attempting to reconstruct a history of “sexuality” *avant la lettre*. He asks in the introduction to the second volume why sexual pleasure has been the subject of special moral concern for so long,<sup>1</sup> which

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault specifically claims that sexual activity has been more important than “alimentary behaviors”: “Why this ethical concern—which, at certain times, in

assumes, rather than establishes, the long existence of that special moral concern. Referring to *The Pedagogue* by Clement of Alexandria and Greek texts like Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, he says:

One already notes a certain association of sexual activity with evil, along with the rule of procreative monogamy, a condemnation of relations between individuals of the same sex, and a glorification of self-restraint (Foucault 1990b: 15).

Looking specifically for antecedents to the norms and values that form the modern “sexuality,” he finds in the ancient Greek's practical texts what amounts to a proto-sexuality, a problematization of the same acts and desires that were to become “sexuality” over two millennia later. This continues throughout the later volumes of the *History* as Foucault focuses on the pleasures of sex, as if they were already conceived of as a separate sphere of ethical concern.

## II. The substitution of *aphrodisia* for *akolasia*

Not only does the anachronistic proto-sexuality contradict Foucault's own theory in volume one about the modern genesis of sexuality, his own analysis of the classical Greek and early Christian texts suggests that sexual pleasures did not constitute a unique or privileged site of ethical concern and practice. Foucault acknowledges the importance of what he calls an “alimentary” ethics for the Greeks and early Christians. The epigraph, taken from *The Use of Pleasure*, describes the enjoyment of food and the ethical problems created by those appetites and pleasures as “analogous” to the enjoyment of sexual intercourse. Later, in the same passage, he says:

It would be interesting, surely, to trace to the long history of the connections between alimentary ethics and sexual ethics, as manifested in doctrines, but also in religious rituals and dietary rules; one would need to discover how, over a long period of time, the play of alimentary prescriptions became uncoupled from that of sexual morals, by following the evolution of their respective importance (with the rather belated moment, no doubt, when the problem of sexual conduct became more worrisome than that of alimentary behaviors) and the gradual differentiation of their specific structure (the moment when sexual desire

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certain societies and groups, appears more important than the moral attention that is focused on other, likewise essential areas of individual and collective life, such as alimentary behaviors or the fulfillment of civic duties” (1990b: 10).

began to be questioned in terms other than alimentary appetite) (Foucault 1990b: 51).

Claiming that the uncoupling of alimentation and sex and the elevation of sex as the more worrisome of the two was “belated,” he suggests that for the Classical Greeks, who are so “early” in his history of sexuality as to represent a time before “sexuality” proper, this uncoupling had not yet happened. The implication of this passage is that not only were alimentary and sexual appetites and ethics analogous or twin, they constituted a single, undifferentiated site of ethical concern, a single site for the moral problematization of their use and enjoyment. In the fourth century B.C., sexual desire *had not yet been questioned* “in terms other than alimentary appetite.”

Foucault's discussion of Aristotle's definition of “self-indulgence” (*akolasia*) in the *Nicomachean Ethics* further establishes the discursive and conceptual sameness of the pleasures of food and drink and the pleasure of sex. For the ancient Greeks, both were pleasures of the body, which were distinguished from pleasures of the mind. According to Aristotle, it was not self-indulgent to delight in paintings, music, the theater, or the smell of a rose:

There is pleasure that is liable to *akolasia* only where there is touch and contact: contact with the mouth, the tongue, and the throat (for the pleasures of food and drink) or contact with other parts of the body (for the pleasure of sex).<sup>2</sup>

Foucault says that his concern in *The Use of Pleasure* is the Greek's moral problematization of the pleasures whose use required moderation (*sōphrōsyne*). According to Aristotle, the opposite of “moderation” (*sōphrōsyne*), or the things that tend towards immoderation and require restraint is *akolasia*. But Foucault focuses on “the general form of the moral inquiry that they pursued concerning the *aphrodisia*” (Foucault 1990b 36). He notes that *aphrodisia*, although best translated as something like “sexual relations” or “carnal acts,” is not an equivalent to the modern “sexuality” because the terms refer to different realities. Nevertheless, he focuses on the best analog for sexuality rather than the term that refers to

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<sup>2</sup> Aristotle also distinguishes *akolasia* from “noble pleasures” like massage or the heat of the gymnasium by claiming *akolasia* affects only certain parts of the body, not the whole body at once. Foucault's enigmatic footnote suggests that the pleasure of the gaze would not be self-indulgent, nor was the kiss part of the field of activities liable to indulgence although it too carried danger (1990b: 40-1).

the set of desires and pleasures that were subject to moderation. The ensemble of acts, gestures, and contacts that produced a certain kind of pleasure whose use required moderation (*sōphrōsyne*), which became the basis of self-mastery and the creation of a self-disciplined free male subject, was *akolasia* not *aphrodisia*. Self-restraint was recommended against the immoderate use of all the pleasures of the body including not only sexual relations but also the consumption of food and drink.<sup>3</sup>

Foucault's substitution of *aphrodisia*, the pleasure associated with sex acts, for *akolasia*, the pleasures of the body that risk self-indulgence, seems to represent a fidelity to the project outlined in the first volume of the *History*. He approaches the classical Greek texts looking for practical moral instruction regarding *sexual conduct*. Although he finds that the pleasures of food and drink were also among the forms of self-indulgence that became targets of moral solicitude, he doesn't let that deter him from his original focus on sexual acts and pleasures. He says "it would be interesting" to figure out when sexual and alimentary ethics were conceptually differentiated, but he proceeds to analyze the moral problematization of sexual pleasure as if it were already a distinct object of moral concern. While he insists that problematization of sex acts by the ancient Greeks predated the emergence of "sexuality" proper, he uses the *aphrodisia* as an ancient proxy sexuality. In his analysis, the discourse of *aphrodisia* becomes a fourth century B.C. version of the problematization of sexual behaviors that, much like sexuality for the Victorians, was a central technology of the self.

Similarly, in *Volume III: The Care of the Self*, Foucault notes the importance of alimentation for early Christians. He says that although the problematization of sexual pleasure intensified in the first and second centuries A.D. and resulted in the creation of elaborate regimens to govern the proper timing and use of sexual pleasure, those regimes were limited in

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<sup>3</sup> Foucault clarifies further in his discussion of the distinction between *sōphrōsyne* and its synonym *enkrateia*. Foucault notes that Aristotle was the first to distinguish systematically between the two terms. According to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *sōphrōsyne* is the deliberate, active choice to be moderate and do what is fitting. This is why its opposite is *akolasia*, the deliberate, active choice to be immoderate and take pleasure in following bad principles. *Enkrateia* referred instead to self-control or continence, and its opposite was *akrasia*, or succumbing to desires in spite of one's better intentions or efforts. Foucault's focus on *sōphrōsyne* reflects his argument that the Greeks' ethics concerned action and exteriority more than desire and interiority (1990b: 63-5).

comparison to dietary regimens. He observes that in medical texts from Greek and Roman practice through the fifth century medical texts of Oribasius, alimentation was of far greater concern than sexual acts. He again refers to some later date when sex became more important:

A whole development—evident in Christian monasticism—will be necessary before the preoccupation with sex will begin to match the preoccupation with food. But alimentary abstentions and fasts will long remain fundamental. And it will be an important moment for the history of ethics in European societies when apprehension about sex and its regimen will significantly outweigh the rigor of alimentary prescriptions (Foucault 1988: 141).

But the third volume, like the second, is devoted almost exclusively to the moral concern with sexual acts and desires. There are only five entries in the index for “diet” (and none for any related terms like “alcohol,” “alimentation,” “consumption,” “drink,” or “food”) versus thirteen for “sexual austerity,” twenty-six for “sex, sexual intercourse,” and fifty for “sexual dreams” (269-77).

If Foucault's project had really shifted from a history of the modern “sexuality” to the longer history of the desiring subject and the moral use of pleasure, it seems that the “fundamental” preoccupation with food should have merited more attention than the glancing acknowledgments of its importance. What was the relationship between the proper uses of food and drink and access to wisdom and the truth? How might the recurring themes of austerity regarding consumption differ from the themes of sexual austerity governing relationships to wives and boys? Could the shift Foucault observes from the Greek's concern with acts (exteriority) to the early Christian's concern with desires (interiority) be attributed partially or wholly to his decision to focus on the ethics of sexual acts (many of which involve a partner and therefore a relationship to that partner) rather than cravings for food and drink? Or was there a similar shift in the dynamics of alimentary ethics? These questions are excluded from possibility by Foucault's preoccupation with the sexuality to come. While scholars like Susan Bordo have used Foucault's ideas productively to critique the creation of the body in relation to sexuality and power and Bordo in particular also traced the concept of the body back to Plato and Augustine, far less attention has been devoted to the power relations embedded in the social construction of the body and ethical self as a product of eating and drinking.



### III. We “Other Greeks”: the ethical concern with food and fatness

Foucault never specifies when, between the fifth and eighteenth centuries, the concern with sex became more important than the concern with food or what the signs of that important shift might have been. The *History* seems to map a continuous increase in the concern with sexual pleasure from the ancient Greeks to the Victorians, but it's never entirely clear how Foucault arrives at the conclusion that sexuality not only became a distinct concept but also surpassed the other pleasures of the body in importance. He bases his claim that alimentary ethics were more important for the ancient Greeks and early Christians on volume of practical advice they published concerning the proper use of food and drink. However, the introductory volume is based not on practical texts, but the discourses and institutional mechanisms that constituted a technology of sex that was deployed to create, discipline, and foster a bourgeois body. Foucault's primary evidence in *Volume I* is the proliferation of discourses of sexuality in fields like medicine, psychiatry, criminal justice, and religion through which sexuality was pathologized in terms of “nervous disorders” and became “the object of medical intervention, judicial action, and an entire theoretical elaboration” (Foucault 1990a: 31).

There was also a proliferation of discourses on consumption in eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries. It was in the eighteenth-century that alcoholic beverages and other drugs came to be defined as distinct from food and their use subject to the discourses of medicine, psychiatry, and social reform (Reinarman 2007: 55). Dr. Benjamin Rush, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, is credited with founding both American temperance movement and American psychiatry (his face appears on the seal of the American Psychiatric Association). He criticized alcohol and tobacco use in both medical and moral language and pioneered the use of a language of “addiction” and the prescription of psychiatric treatment for the practice of excess drinking (Du Puis 2007: 36). His *Enquiry into the effects of spirituous liquors on the human body and the mind* ranked liquids according to how beneficial they were with water and buttermilk at the top of the list, wine in the middle, and hard liquor at the bottom. Tellingly, he called the chart a “moral thermometer” and associated anything more alcoholic than “weak punch” with lists of vices, diseases and punishments (see Fig. 1) (Rush 1791). In his writing on tobacco, he claimed that statistical observation had verified the tendency for tobacco to activate or worsen diseases of the nerves, but also complained of its

filthiness and associations with idleness and rudeness. Noting that tobacco is alleged to provide relief from “intemperance in eating,” he says, “Would it not be much better to obviate the alleged necessity of using Tobacco by always eating a moderate meal?” (Rush 1789: 266).

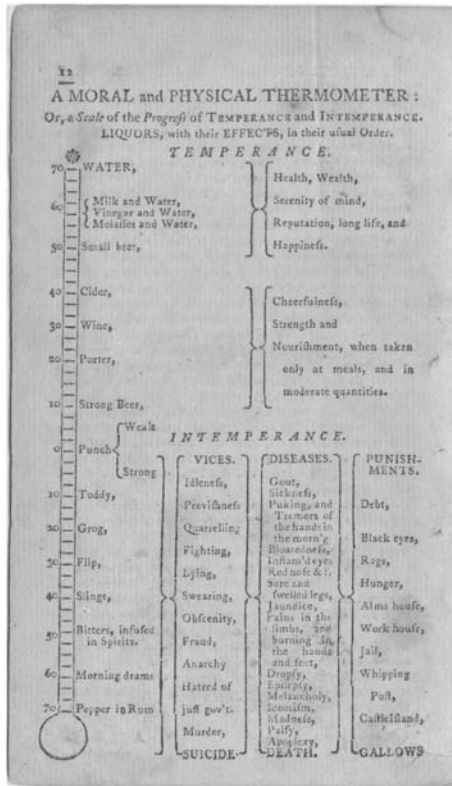


Fig. 1 The Moral Thermometer from Benjamin Rush's *An Inquiry into the Effects of Spirituous Liquors on the Human Body and the Mind*, 1790. Provided by The Library Company of Philadelphia.

The growing associations between moderation in the use of food and drink, social reform, religious salvation, and self-betterment were part of fringe movements like the health crusades of Sylvester Graham and John Harvey Kellogg and more mainstream reform movements like home economics. The urban social reformers who worked to spread the new

“science of cookery” at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> C. were particularly interested in taming the exotic foodways of new immigrants to the U.S. They expressed concern about immigrants’ “excessive” consumption of coffee, alcohol, and spicy and pickled foods, which they claimed would cause indigestion, stunted growth, excessive sexual appetites, impropriety, and disorderly behavior. Frugal, efficient, bland cooking based on the traditions of the early Puritan settlers of New England was seen as an issue of health, moral restraint, and social welfare and advocated in public school cooking classes, women’s colleges, instructional kitchens, home visits by charitable organizations, and a wide array of practical texts.<sup>4</sup>

As with sexuality, the bourgeois family was one of the main sites of the deployment of modern alimentary ethics, largely through the production of a distinguished bourgeois body and subjectivity. In the eighteenth-century, the family meal became increasingly important for bourgeois families, as eating “correctly” became a crucial way of distinguishing oneself from the working classes and serving elaborate, French-influenced forms of preparation and “service a la Russe” at home became a popular way of entertaining guests (Levenstein 2003: 61). In America, it was seen as inappropriate to delegate the feeding of children to servants because mealtime was such a crucial opportunity for training in manners, conversation, and taste. Much of the advice published for Victorian mothers focused on the proper care of the adolescent female body, including how daughters should eat and exercise to cultivate the correct social identity and moral character. Meat and spicy foods were thought to stimulate and signal sexual desire so their consumption was seen as unsuitable for girls and women. More generally, eating, food preparation, digestion, and defecation were all seen as un-ladylike. According to Joan Jacobs Brumberg, this combination of smothering maternal concern about eating and the elevation of restraint and physical delicacy prompted the emergence of anorexia nervosa among middle-class girls in the Victorian era (2000: 134).

Many of the twentieth-century shifts in Western industrial eating habits seem to reflect a relaxation of the eighteenth and nineteenth century moral strictures regarding diet. A world in which pickles and casual restaurant dining are associated with the lower classes and lax morals seems like a distant and ridiculous past. The condemnation of immigrant foodways has

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<sup>4</sup> For a much fuller discussion of these movements, the actors involved, and the contexts that shaped them see Shapiro 2004, Gabaccia 1998, and Hoganson 2007.

largely given way to a celebration of the “exotic” and growing appetite for “authentically” Other cuisines. As more women entered the workforce, people ate increasing numbers of meals in restaurants and outsourced the feeding of their children to schools, the industrial food production system, and childcare professionals. Both sides of the Janus-faced rise of fast food and the popularization of “gourmet” represent a breakdown of bourgeois family dining rituals and home economists' Puritan recipes. But there are other indications that especially in the quarter-century since Foucault's death, moral concern about alimentary practice and its relationship to the body has, if anything, intensified.

Religious studies scholar Michelle LeWica argues that in the past thirty years, thinness has become a kind of religion for American women, complete with sacred images, rituals, moral teachings, communities and salvation stories. Dieting, according to LeWica, fulfills unmet spiritual needs in American girls and women, and substitutes for religions by helping teach them who they are and how they should relate to others. In other words, women develop a subjectivity primarily through their relationship to food (1999). While eating disorders are far more common among women, the moralization of fatness applies to both men and women. Paul Campos, a critic of the diet industry, says of the media fascination with Bill Clinton's weight in the coverage of the scandal leading up to his impeachment in 1998:

To call attention to Clinton's weight—to label him fat became a sort of shorthand for everything about the man that seemed most disturbing: his lack of personal discipline, his self-indulgence, his aura of immaturity, and most of all his reckless sensuality (Campos 2003: 183).

The association of fat bodies with sexual excess and moral weakness and the converse association of thinness with self-control and moral austerity suggest not only that alimentation is still an active site of moral solicitude, but also that either the digestive and sexual pleasures of the body have reunited or, more likely, they were never fully uncoupled in the first place.

#### **IV. Self-control, shame, and *The Biggest Loser* weigh-in**

The contemporary moral concern with food and fatness is on particularly spectacular display in NBC's competitive weight-loss show *The Biggest Loser*. The first season of the show aired in 2004, just months after U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Richard H. Carmona named obesity a national health crisis and “the fastest-growing cause of disease and death in America”

(2004). The basic formula involves between twelve and eighteen contestants who live together and compete to lose the most weight every week with the help of personal trainers, who design exercise and diet plans for them. Episodes are comprised of reality television-style footage of the grueling workouts, occasional bickering and lots of confessional interviews that frame game show-style competitions, the weekly weigh-in, and the elimination of one or more contestants.

Despite the fact that elimination is usually decided by a popular vote of some of the contestants, the show constructs narratives that attribute success in the competition to personal effort measured in terms of pounds lost. After the first week of competition in season three, a contestant named Heather verbally attacked Jen, who had lost the lowest percentage of her body weight that week: "You had the lowest percentage. So just know that. So don't try and lie to yourself or lie to anyone else. You had the lowest percentage because you didn't bust it." As a voice-over from the personal trainer reinforces Heather's accusations, the scene cuts to a flashback from the gym earlier in the week when Jen explains her slow pace, "I think it's called a break" (*Biggest Loser* 2006). The competition relies on and fosters the narrative of meritocracy that takes the shrinking body as evidence of superior self-control.

The show also rewards capitulation to the expert advice provided by the trainers, and relies on and reinforces associations between fatness and emotional excess, self-mastery and masculinity. However, the primary appeal of the show doesn't seem to be its reproduction of prevailing ideologies about fatness, moral restraint, and meritocracy. Nearly half of every episode and most of the content on the website is devoted to the numbers displayed on the scale every week and "before and after" shots that emphasize the visible transformations week to week and over the duration of the show. For the weekly weigh-in, contestants don form-fitting bike shorts and sports bras and parade single-file into a room with industrial-size scales positioned in front of the digital displays that broadcast their former and current weight at the "moment of truth." Suspenseful music plays as the contestants step onto the scale one by one and the display flashes numbers that jump around wildly. Finally, the scale settles on a number.

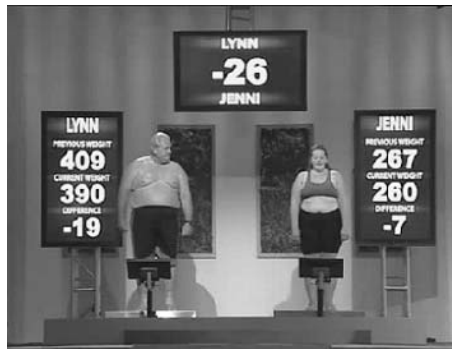


Fig. 2 *The Biggest Loser* Season 5 Episode 1

Jennifer Fremlin compares this moment to the “money shot” in porn, a normally private moment of climax and vulnerability turned into a titillating spectacle (2008). Fremlin says she fast-forwards through the rest of the show to get to the weigh-ins, and according to the Nielsen ratings for season finales, she's not the only one. Ratings grow substantially in the second hour, when re-caps of the season finally give way to weigh-ins.<sup>5</sup> According to Fremlin, the squirming pleasure offered by the weigh-in is the public display of shame which shields viewers from the shame of their voyeurism.

They put their shame on display: at being fat, their exerted bodies wheeze and squeeze into spandex workout clothes meant for svelter shapes. Their exhibition becomes a cover for our own shame as viewers who, by participating in their humiliation, in turn abject ourselves (Fremlin 2008).

Both the shame of voyeurism and the shame of the weigh-in rely on a deep-seated moral and aesthetic revulsion to the fat body. The televisual gaze that fixes on the exposed body on the scale is punitive but also encourages identification—like the contestant, the viewer waits with anticipation as the numbers flash and is ashamed of the body on display, but the viewer's own body and the number on the scale that reveals the truth of her self-mastery is kept private.

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<sup>5</sup> The season five finale, which aired April 15, 2008 averaged 3.6 percent of viewing households during the 8pm hour and jumped to 5.1 for the 9pm hour according to Nielsen's overnight report (Fitzgerald 2008).

## V. Conclusion

The desires and discourses that make a show like *The Biggest Loser* possible are part of an ethics of food and eating that reflect a moral problematization of food, dating back at least to the ancient Greeks. Those concerns have not necessarily been constant and manifest in different ways in different contexts. Perhaps the Victorians were more preoccupied with sex than alimentation, but there are some indications that in recent decades, the concern with the moral use of food has once again become dominant. According to Julie Guthman, the public discourse about obesity meet the criteria used by Nancy Tomes to identify a “germ panic” like the early twentieth-century concern with tuberculosis:

a) the disease is deemed news-worthy; b) its incidence reflects other societal problems, giving activists and reformers an angle for addressing their specific concerns; and c) it has commercial potential to sell products or services, so that public concern is heightened by economic interests (Guthman 2007).

Michael Gard and Jan Wright attribute the explosion of public discourse about a national or even global “obesity epidemic” despite the fact that the evidence for such an epidemic is actually quite weak to the fundamental entanglement of obesity research with moral discourses about fatness (Gard and Wright 2005). Thinness, widely believed to be something achieved and maintained through the right use of pleasure, is taken as evidence of virtue, associated with wealth and sophistication, and seen as a near-obligatory goal. A reconsideration of the role of food in the moral use of bodily pleasures not only has implications for the history of ethics, it might be one of the primary technologies of the contemporary self.

## Image Credits

1. Ardent Spirits: The Origins of the American Temperance Movement. Original exhibit curated by Jesse Randall and virtual exhibit designed by Nicole H. Scalessa. Provided by The Library Company of Philadelphia.
2. Screen shot by the author from the video recap at the Biggest Loser website  
<[http://www.nbc.com/The\\_Biggest\\_Loser\\_5/video/episodes.shtml](http://www.nbc.com/The_Biggest_Loser_5/video/episodes.shtml)>  
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# THE CONSUMER HERMENEUTICS OF THE SELF AND MODERN COMPULSORY HAPPINESS

LUKA ZEVNIK

In addition to the established sociological accounts of consumer culture that lucidly explore the material, economic, social and symbolic aspects of consumption and the related issues of lifestyle (Featherstone, 1991; Jameson, 1992; Lury, 1996; Slater, 1997; Ritzer, 2004), we believe that a Foucauldian perspective on consumer practices can valuably contribute to consumer research by explaining the historical constitution of the (subject of) contemporary consumption experience. While other Foucauldian inspired attempts at an analysis of consumer subjectivity (Miller & Rose, 1997; Binkley, 2006; Zwick et al., 2008) have so far remained largely within the frame of governmentality, the principle aim of this article will be to develop a new theoretical approach to consumption practices based on Foucault's theory of ethics and the hermeneutics of the self. Such a perspective is however not intended to be set up against the theories of consumption within the frame of governmentality, but instead hopes to complement them. This task is relevant because in the consumption realm—as we shall argue—there are two distinctive modes of freedom. Besides the freedom to consume connected with governmentality, there is also the freedom to desire, which brings a new set of problems and therefore calls for a new theoretical perspective. To this end, we will conduct a genealogy of the modern consumer and his freedom to desire with which we will seek to show that the contemporary subject of consumption experience is not only (self)-governed but also (self)-deciphered.

Unlike the majority of consumption research (Featherstone, 1991; Slater, 1997; Miller, 1999; Ritzer, 2004), our genealogical analysis will not only focus on what is different in our present consumption experience but will also try to reveal what has remained the same. Thus, by illuminating problematic underlying historical continuities of early Christian practices of the self we will accentuate certain dangerous dimensions of our

consumption experience that have been ignored by the epochal framing that is often assumed in consumption research.

### **A Foucauldian account of consumer practices**

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the rapid process of industrialization and commodification enabled an economic system and a consumer society with an almost unlimited supply of highly differentiated consumer goods with a plethora of cultural meanings attached to them, offering the average Western consumer a broad freedom of consumer choice (Featherstone, 1991; Slater, 1997). As such, contemporary consumer culture “is premised upon the expansion of capitalist commodity production which has given rise to a vast accumulation of material culture in the form of consumer goods and sites of purchase and consumption,” and “has resulted in the growing salience of leisure and consumption activities in contemporary Western societies” (Featherstone, 1991: 13).

Within the Foucauldian perspective, increased freedom (of choice) in the consumption realm means that the experience of the average consumer in contemporary Western societies has become determined less by the direct influence of external/objective conditions and more by the nature of one’s relationship to oneself. For Foucault a complex historical experience is “constituted from and around certain forms of behavior: an experience that conjoins the field of knowledge,” “a collection of rules (which differentiate the permissible from the forbidden, natural from monstrous, normal from pathological, what is decent and what is not, and so on),” “and a mode of relation between the individual and himself” (Foucault, 2000: 200). Yet for Foucault (2000: 202) “the relative importance of these three axes is not always the same for all forms of experience.” In the case of consumption in the pre-modern era, for example, commodities were largely distributed by “a collection of rules” (Foucault, 2000: 200); that is, systems of coercion and concrete (physical) dividing practices. Most people consumed what was available or given to them according to their position in society and were thus more “passive subjects” (Foucault, 2000: 291) of the consumption experience. Here it is important to note that many people in numerous developing countries and even certain marginalized, disadvantaged people in Western societies are still dependent on similar distribution strategies. We also do not argue that social status has completely lost its significance in contemporary society but, considering the vast supply of consumer goods, the predominating consumption patterns are directly enforced much less and are therefore more the result

of a “mode of relation between the individual and himself” (Foucault, 2000: 200). In this sense contemporary consumers are more “active subjects” who constitute themselves “in an active fashion through practices of the self” (Foucault, 2000: 291). Nevertheless, these practices are “not something invented by the individual himself: They are models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, and his social group” (Foucault, 2000: 291). Contemporary consumer practices are thus proposed as practices of the self (“*pratiques de soi*”), which in Western society largely constitute our present experience and which became an important strategy of the individual to construct his personal identity and make sense of the world in which he lives and acts. According to Foucault (2000: 87), self-forming activities are an important part of the relationship to oneself and can be defined as

the procedures, which no doubt exist in every civilization, offered or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of self-mastery or self-knowledge.

These self-forming activities are important especially because they are “frequently linked to the techniques for the direction of individuals” (Foucault, 2000: 277).

### **The freedom to consume and the freedom to desire**

Freedom (in the consumption realm) therefore always comes at a price: “there is the way in which political argument bases itself increasingly upon the value of maximization of individual freedom and choice, and enjoins each person and family to take responsibility for the care of themselves” (Rose, 1996: 295). As such, contemporary consumption practices are one of the “points of intersection between programmes for the government of others and the practical means accorded to human beings to understand and act upon themselves” (Rose, 1996: 298). Such accounts of consumer practices are based on Foucault’s concept of governmentality, with which he intended “to cover the whole range of practices that constitute, define, organize, and instrumentalize the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other” (Foucault, 2000: 300).

According to Binkley (2006), we have to be careful when applying the theory of governmentality to the realm of consumption, which has its own

distinctive characteristics. For Binkley (2006: 343), theorists of governmentality like Rose, DuGay and Dean “who have assessed the various methods by which the personal freedoms imposed by neo-liberal social, economic and cultural configurations are instrumentalized, made the objects of direction and control” have “underemphasized the practices of the consumer, or reduced them to a dependent set of practices to that of professional, productive life.” Binkley (2006) believes that such a theoretical undertaking is inappropriate because in the consumption realm different kinds of freedoms operate than in the production realm:

Like the entrepreneur, the freedom of the consumer is the freedom to transform the self by stepping back in thought, but the medium of such thinking is not that of instrumental planning but of something quite different—it is one of fantasy, play, distraction and imaginary escape (Binkley, 2006: 351).

In sum, Binkley argues that “the problem today is not merely the government of freedom, but the identification, separation and allocation of distinct modes of freedom to their respective realms” (Binkley, 2006: 344). In the case of consumption this demands the unique adoption of the governmentality thesis for this particular realm:

To better understand how consumption is governed, we must grasp the kinds of freedoms that operate within its domain—a freedom that is characterized less by instrumental behavior and more by expressive and ephemeral dispositions sustainable only in a bounded realm of liminality and play (Binkley, 2006: 352).

At this point, we would like to extend Binkley’s argument even further and propose that, just as there are distinctions in the modes of freedom between the production and the consumption realms, also within the consumption realm itself there are certain differences in the modes of freedom that demand their own specific theoretical accounts. Even though Binkley (2006: 352) considers the role of desire and imagination within the consumption realm, he remains focused on the aspect of freedom that we will name *the freedom to consume*. This aspect of freedom in the consumption realm is connected with the broad freedom of consumer choice in contemporary Western societies enabled by “a vast accumulation of material culture in the form of consumer goods and sites of purchase and consumption,” (Featherstone, 1991: 13) and intensified as the realm of consumption is becoming “radicalized in its magnitude and reach” (Binkley, 2006: 345). The increasing “powers of seduction and aesthetization” in the consumption realm are induced by an “increasing

elaboration of consumer media” and with the “easy availability of consumer credit” (Binkley, 2006: 345). The perspective of the *freedom to consume* subsumes predominately external conditions that are supposed to determine individuals consuming experience and the risks within it:

The increasingly persuasive powers of consumption, from physical environments to media, have generated a culture that undermines rational pattern of thinking, exposing individuals to currents of desire that often motivate purchasing decisions that are inconsistent with their larger needs, budgets and other responsibilities (Binkley, 2006: 355).

From this point of view, consumers are confronted with powerful external seductions and thus need to be equipped with a new “technique of governmentality,” a “unique modality of selfcontrol and discipline” in the form of various “therapeutic treatments” aimed at preventing them from “losing themselves entirely” in the “phantasmagorical transformations of the carnivalesque” (Binkley, 2006: 355). Consumers have to learn how “to withstand seductions without giving in entirely to them” (Binkley, 2006: 355). As such, “the binding of the liminal constitutes an object of governmentality itself” (Binkley, 2006: 355). According to Binkley what is of great importance here are the boundaries between the various realms of freedom: “The responsabilized subject is one capable of disentangling the modes of autonomous choice that operate in these realms, and consigning each to their respective logics of government” (Binkley, 2006: 344). Individuals in contemporary consumer societies therefore have to “learn the tricks of maintaining boundaries between production and consumption as a personal responsibility” (Binkley, 2006: 359). In addition to Binkley’s perspective, which is clearly an important contribution to the theory of consumption as well as to the field of governmentality studies, we believe that there is another more internal and subjective aspect of freedom operating in the realm of consumption: *the freedom to desire*. In order to fully understand how the conditions for the contemporary consumption experience are constituted, it is not enough to only consider the external factors like the extensive supply of consumer goods or the easy availability of consumer credit, but we also have to remember Rose (1996: 295) and take into account that “subjectivity has its own history.” As a consequence, we will conduct a genealogical analysis of freedom to desire, which is at the same time a genealogy of an important part of contemporary (consumer) subjectivity. While the analysis of the freedom to consume is best undertaken with the help of Foucault’s concept of governmentality (which is well stated by Binkley [2006]), we believe that Foucault’s concept of ethics provides us with a

better theoretical perspective for the analysis of the freedom to desire. Obviously desire is also present within the freedom to consume but, from that perspective, it is not the desire itself that is problematic as are the material consequences of the consumer's decisions caused by it. While within the freedom to consume individuals are incited to govern themselves in order to avoid the material and pathological consequences of their "currents of desire" (Binkley, 2006: 355, 356), within the freedom to desire they are jeopardized by desire itself. The freedom of desire is not only problematic because it motivates possible irresponsible and irrational consumer behavior, but also because it can—through the modern hermeneutics of the self—cause permanent internal tension within contemporary modes of consumer subjectivity. As such, while the possible dangerous consequences of the freedom to consume can be harmful mostly in extreme cases (like compulsive shopping), the dangers of the freedom to desire connected with the modern hermeneutics of the self are acute in a broader sense, since "a hermeneutics of the self has been diffused across Western culture through numerous channels and integrated with various types of attitudes and experience, so that it is difficult to isolate and separate it from our spontaneous experience" (Foucault, 2000: 224). Foucault's genealogical analysis along four aspects of ethics (relationship to oneself) reveals that Christianity, with its emphasis on the practices of the renunciation of the self, in comparison with antiquity, has brought certain internal tensions to Western forms of subjectivity. As a consequence, we see the main danger of the modern freedom to desire in its potential to present a continuity of certain elements of Christian forms of subjectivity that could in a similar way also create internal tensions for modern individuals.

### **Erosion of the ancient care for the self**

To justify our principal argument, namely that there are still certain sediments of Christian modes of the relationship to oneself inherent in contemporary consumer practices, we will conduct a comparative analysis between the contemporary consumer self and the Christian self that, as we shall see, reveals obvious similarities. In order to do so, we first have to examine—using Foucault's four aspects of ethics—how it is that Christianity overturned ancient forms of subjectivity.

According to Foucault (2000: 262-265), the relationship to oneself, which he calls ethics, has four aspects. The first aspect, called the ethical substance, answers the question, which is the aspect or part of myself or

my behavior that is concerned with moral conduct? The second aspect, called the mode of subjectivation, is the way in which people are invited or incited to recognize their moral obligations. The means by which we can change ourselves in order to become ethical subjects is what Foucault calls the self-forming activities or technologies (practices) of the self, which constitute the third aspect of the relationship to oneself. Finally, the fourth aspect of the relationship to oneself is the telos, which tells us to which kind of being we aspire when we behave in a moral way.

In the last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1988, 1990b) describes various forms of subjectivity that emerged in specific societies and in specific historical periods of antiquity. What was common to most of them was that they were not rooted in any firm, formal external ethical or legal rules; instead, the individual's behavior was regulated by an internal ethical relationship with oneself. Ethical reflection starts in antiquity exactly at the point where the rules, regulations and formal restrictions end. Ethics was a matter of personal "aesthetic" and/or "political choice" (Foucault, 2000: 266). If one wanted to occupy an important position in society, to rule others or to leave an exalted reputation behind, first one had to conduct certain work on oneself, an ascetic practice that would give one's subjectivity the right form. To be able to rule others, for example, one first had to become a master of oneself. This was done through what the Greeks called care of the self (*epimeleia heautou*). Foucault explains that for the Greeks care of the self "does not mean simply being interested in one-self, nor does it mean having a certain tendency to self-attachment or self-fascination. The care of the self is a very powerful word, which means working on, or being concerned with something" (Foucault, 2000: 269). This is because "no personal skill can be acquired without exercise; neither can one learn the art of living, the *tekhne tou biou*, without an askesis which must be taken as training of oneself by oneself" (Foucault (2000: 273).

In the last volume of *The History of Sexuality*, *The Care of the Self*, Foucault (1988) goes on to describe how for the Stoics care of the self is still of great importance but what has changed are its ethical grounds. Ethics is no longer only a personal political or aesthetical choice, but starts acquiring certain universal aspects. Before, the mastery of oneself "was directly related to a dissymmetrical relation to others" (Foucault, 2000: 267) because "in the classical perspective, to be a master of oneself meant, first, taking into account only oneself and not the other, because to be a master of oneself meant that you were able to rule others" (Foucault, 2000:



267). On the other hand, the Stoics were facing the decline of classical political institutions (polis) that resulted in the redefinition of classical values. As a consequence, the role of males within society changes “both in their homes toward their wives and also in the political field” and “becomes much less reciprocal than before” (Foucault, 2000: 267). Being a master of yourself is no longer a choice but a universal imperative: “you have to do it because you are a rational being” (Foucault, 2000: 266) and “in this mastery of yourself, you are related to other people, who are also masters of themselves” (Foucault, 2000: 267). These newly introduced aspects of universality presented a fertile substratum for the forthcoming Christian ethics of the universal and absolute law of God to which individuals must subject themselves completely. For Foucault, this is the point at which the ancient culture of the self was eroded by Christianity, which “substituted the idea of the self that one had to renounce, because clinging to the self was opposed to God’s will, for the idea of the self that had to be created as a work of art” (Foucault, 2000: 271):

From the moment that the culture of the self was taken up by Christianity, it was, in a way, put to work for the exercise of pastoral power, to the extent that the care for the self became, essentially the care for others which was the pastor’s job. But insofar as individual salvation is channeled—to a certain extent at least—through a pastoral institution that has the care of the souls as its object, the classical care of the self disappeared, that is, was integrated and lost a large part of its autonomy (Foucault, 2000: 278).

Under these conditions, the relationship to oneself (ethics) changes. Ethical substance for the Christians becomes desire, flesh, concupiscence which had to be neutralized, suppressed in order to reach the telos: “the Christian formula puts an accent on desire and tries to eradicate it” (Foucault, 2000: 269). The Christian telos was absolute purity, which is supposed to bring the individual closer to Heaven, to God, to immortality, and the mode of subjectivation for the Christian self was the divine law imposed by God, an external and absolute metaphysical authority. Since God is omnipotent and absolute, the individual as a limited being is put in a position where he never fulfils his moral obligations enough, he never surrenders enough. The Christian was never clean enough because, according to Foucault (2000: 270):

For Christians, the possibility that Satan can get inside your soul and give you thoughts you cannot recognize as satanic, but might interpret as coming from God, leads to uncertainty about what is going on inside your

soul. You are unable to know what the real root of desire is, at least without hermeneutic work.

Such constant internal tension and uncertainty demands new technologies of the self, which for the Christians take the form of endless “self-deciphering” (Foucault, 2000: 268):

The new Christian self had to be constantly examined because in this self were lodged concupiscence and desires of the flesh. From that moment on, the self was no longer something to be made but something to be renounced and deciphered (Foucault, 2000: 274).

### **Contemporary consumption practices and modern secular hermeneutics of the self**

Foucault argues that in the contemporary Western forms of subjectivity there remain traces of Christian self-renunciation and the techniques of hermeneutics of the self: “we inherit the tradition of Christian morality which makes self-renunciation the condition for salvation” (Foucault, 2000: 228). In order to understand how in spite of the fact that the other aspects of the relationship to oneself have undergone significant transformations the techniques of self-deciphering have only been modified slightly, we will now examine the contemporary (consumer) self.

Ethical substance for modern individuals is, according to Foucault (2000: 263), constituted by the realm of feeling itself. In the case of the modern consumer self, it is especially the feelings of happiness and pleasure that are emphasized. The telos is no longer beyond our world in heaven like for the Christians but in this very world of the here and now. The feeling of happiness, which in the modern consumer society is closely related with desire, is emphasized even so much that the French philosopher Pascal Bruckner (2000: 16) speaks of compulsory happiness:

I understand compulsory happiness as an ideology of the second half of the 20th century, which judges everything only according to pleasure or displeasure it brings to our experience, as a command that we have to be euphoric. Everyone who doesn't subject to it has to be ashamed and forced into a feeling of discomfort.

This moral responsibility of the absolute happiness and self-fulfillment connected with pleasure and joy that preferably should last for the whole life is a consumer's mode of subjectivation. The desire is important in both subjectivation processes (Christian and consumer) which both put the individual in a position in which he never fulfils his moral obligations

enough, he never surrenders enough. The Christian is never clean enough because as we saw earlier that there is always “the possibility that Satan can get inside your soul and give you thoughts you cannot recognize as satanic” (Foucault, 2000: 270). Such circumstances require constant hermeneutical work. Similarly, the modern consumer follows an external imperative to enjoy and to be happy, but never succeeds in being happy enough. The desire is now emancipated: “I could say that the modern formula is desire, which is theoretically underlined and practically accepted, since you have to liberate your own desire” (Foucault, 2000: 269). The individual is now free to desire but the practice of the hermeneutics of the self and the internal tension remain. If the hermeneutic work imposed upon the Christian self aims to discover the root of desire in order to eradicate it, the hermeneutic work performed by the consumer self is used to discover the truth of desire in order to liberate it. This is necessary because, similarly as in the Christian self, in the consumer self there is a constant internal uncertainty. In the consumer case this is about whether real happiness can be achieved by consuming. When we try to liberate our desire by consuming there is a permanent tension connected with the following questions and doubts: When we buy a certain consumer product, does it bring enough happiness to us? Could we be even happier? Are we truly happy? Do we have to be happier? Can we really find self-fulfillment in consuming? Is there something with the product that might jeopardize our feeling of happiness? Should we have bought another product? And so on. As a consequence, in practice every actual acquisition of a consumer commodity finally leads to disappointment, which in turn starts to feed new desire. Out of the immanent implicit concern that real products would again disappoint him, the desire itself and not the actual objects become the predominant source of pleasure for the modern consumer. According to Colin Campbell’s *Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern consumerism* (1996), modern consumer hedonism is not so much about materialism and the appropriation of goods but about seeking pleasure in the imagination. For Campbell (1996: 203), modern consumer ethics is marked:

by a preoccupation with pleasure, envisaged as a potential quality of all experience. In order to extract this from life, however, the individual has to substitute illusory for real stimuli, and by creating and manipulating illusions and hence the emotive dimension of consciousness, construct his own pleasurable environment. This modern, autonomous, and illusory form of hedonism commonly manifests itself as day-dreaming and fantasizing.

And the more the consumer relies on imagination and desire as the main source of pleasure, the more he gets disappointed with the actual acquisition of real goods, and so the circle continues. Since material objects never provide absolute fulfillment, the modern consumer instead starts to take pleasure in practices of imagination, which are closely connected with the modern hermeneutics of the self and present a continuity of Christian technology of the self. Imagining, desiring and fantasizing about consumer commodities are always closely related with the hermeneutics of the truth about our desire, needs and self-fulfillment.

As we have seen, the problem of desire is central for the Christian self as well as for the consumer self. If the Christian form of subjectivity urged the individual to suppress his desire in order to achieve the telos (absolute purity), then the situation with the consumer mode is exactly the opposite but finally leads to very similar hermeneutical technologies of the self. The telos for the consumer self requires the constant fulfillment and actualization of desire, which results in an essential and for the consumer constitutive paradox: the more he strives to fulfill his desire through the consumption of material objects, the further away he moves from materialism itself. If Christians suppressed their desire in order to distance themselves from worldly material goods, the modern consumer achieves the same outcome through the inflation of desire. But this does not mean that the modern consumer does not spend. Indeed this distance from the material is merely an internal process, which results in another paradox. The internal distance from the material world can produce even greater material consequences in the economic realm since the products used as stimulators of the imagination and impulsive shopping are needed in even greater numbers than objects with their use value only.

## Conclusion

We hope our analysis has shown that a Foucauldian account of the modern consumer self represents a relevant alternative to contemporary (sociological) accounts of the consumption realm based on the theories of de-traditionalization that “constantly accentuate our difference from all that has gone before” (Rose, 1996: 306). A Foucauldian perspective enables us to reflect not only on what is fundamentally different in our historical experience, but also on what has remained the same (Zevnik, 2007). This is of great value especially if we aspire to illuminate the masking and “gradual modification in the complex of authorities which govern the relations that different sectors of the population, in different

practices, are urged to establish with themselves, and a modification in our relations with these authorities of subjectivation” (Rose, 1996: 322). Inasmuch as contemporary consumption experience is constituted both through the freedom to consume as well as through the freedom to desire, such Foucauldian reflection of the consumer realm has to be undertaken equally from the aspect of governmentality and from the aspect of modern secularized hermeneutics of the self. A contemporary subject (of consumption experience) is thus just as much (self)-governed as it is (self)-deciphered. As a consequence we believe that a theoretical paradigm based on Foucault’s concepts of ethics and the hermeneutics of the self can valuably contribute not only to consumer research but also to certain other areas of interest in philosophy, sociology and cultural studies, which focus on “the practices within which, in our times and in the past, human beings have been made up as subjects” (Rose, 1996: 296).

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